

MEENA COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE (MCI)

FINAL REPORT THE GOVERNMENT OF NORWAY



Regional Office for South Asia

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Contribution Data

Progress Report:	Final report The Government of Norway
Assisted region:	South Asia
Assisted Countries:	Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan
Assisted Project:	Meena Communication Initiative for the Girl Child in South Asia-Phase 3
PBA Number:	SI/00/248-1
P/L Number:	E/ICEF/1999/P/L.30
Programmable amount:	US\$ 1,747,463.52
Funds utilized:	US\$ 1,635,008.41
Balance unspent:	US\$ 112,455.11
Duration of contribution:	22/06/2000-- 30/04/2004
Period covered by report:	22/06/2000-30/04/2004
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

The Meena initiative has been one of the most ambitious human rights programmes of its kind ever undertaken. The result is the creation of a brand that is widely recognised and appreciated in most countries in the region and which is a successful advocacy and teaching tool for girls and children's rights. The Meena figure has achieved remarkable popularity as it tackles the key issues affecting children, and the main threats to the rights of millions of girls in South Asia. Good evidence shows that children exposed to Meena comic strips and stories take in the messages and are more aware as a result.

The Meena Communication Initiative (MCI) arose out of a need to find a culturally appropriate way to get over messages that primarily address the empowerment of girls in one of the most challenging gender environments in the world. Showing a healthy, personable child who can engage constructively with her family and her community to help overcome serious issues faced by all has proved extremely popular. Undoubtedly it has helped to achieve programme objectives. Undoubtedly too it has enhanced perceptions of girls. Where Meena has been implemented alongside other programme interventions it has proven to be an effective messaging device. In addition, there are a numerous examples where children have wanted to either emulate Meena or have adopted her as a figurehead for their own efforts to change their worlds.

The Norwegian Government has been the principle supporter of the MCI over the past twelve years, and it worth reviewing what has been achieved. The MCI has 30 titles, all researched and field tested, including books, films and radio packages which will remain fresh for each succeeding generation of youngsters. Within the initiative are tools for those concerned with getting girls into school, combating early marriage and trafficking, ending stigma on HIV/AIDS, cutting road and domestic accidents, improving immunisation rates and enhancing recognition of child rights. It is a remarkable achievement. Meena is widely recognised across South Asia, and other UNICEF offices in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia are starting to incorporate the MCI in their awareness campaigns. New uses for Meena are being found in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, where the smiling figure is reaching out to children to warn them about land mines.

In the last year considerable efforts have been made to create new episodes and to develop further the Meena brand in countries. In addition there has been push to do a serious evaluation of the MCI. The result is that there are more products, many of them dealing with MDG priorities, and we know much more than ever before about the best use of the MCI. This should lead to better programming and targeted actions.

The evaluation has highlighted the difficulties of proving how people learn lessons and pin pointing exactly what piece of information was picked up from what sources. As always parents are considered to be the most important source of information for children. Significantly however the evaluation has shown that where Meena is available, there is a very high recognition factor and the films being shown on television are especially memorable. Given that parents have the most influence it is therefore doubly valuable that Meena is seen as entertaining enough to gain adult attention on a medium where families are likely to be

watching together, and are informative enough to provide some answers to questions that may arise.

This funding marked the end of the Third Phase of the MCI. Phase One between 1991-2 saw the project operationalised and creative talent identified. The Second Phase between 1993 - 1997 saw the development of 12 episodes and research along with consideration of maintenance and sustainability. The Third Phase from 1998 to April 2004 has focused on development of products, broad scale implementation through South Asia and long term sustainability.

The donors who have supported the MCI through this length of time have shown sustained commitment. A study in Nepal in 2002 on Life Skills practices reported that 96% of the children who were aware of Meena attributed at least one behavioural change in their life to the messages in the stories. In addition, of the children exposed to Meena, over 94% said they were treated equally in their families compared to 84% of the children who had not seen MCI products. Household survey data from India and Bangladesh gives information on specific practises and reveal a range of activities and behaviour that mirror key Meena messages. These are encouraging reports. The challenge now will be to seek partnerships at a regional or country level to ensure that the MCI is used in a relevant way as part of structured communication programmes for continued an advocacy programme with proven appeal.

1.2 Goals and Objectives of the Project

Overall goal statement

To promote the Rights of the Child and support their implementation and realization, with special focus on female children in South Asia in order to improve their status and develop their potential by influencing and supporting the forces of social and behavioural development/behavioural change in the region.

General objectives:

To research, produce and disseminate regional episodes on the Rights of the Child in order to:

1. Create awareness and advocate for the reduction of existing disparities in the status and treatment of girls.
2. Support social mobilization processes designed to realize the potential of female children and to foster their participation in development.
3. Produce a dynamic role model for girls which will assist in their acquisition of psycho-social life skills which are essential for empowerment.
4. Provide a model for improved gender relationships, beginning at an early age.
5. Communicate information regarding the survival, protection and development of children, including specific messages on education, health, gender equity and freedom from all kinds of exploitation and abuse.

In addition, the MCI aimed to:

6. Sustain all the above objectives and emerge as independent, self-sustained national entities (based on need in the participating countries) in the future by creating stronger

and meaningful partnerships with corporate donors/private sectors, NGOs and broadcast media.

1.3 Rationale for the Meena Communication Initiative

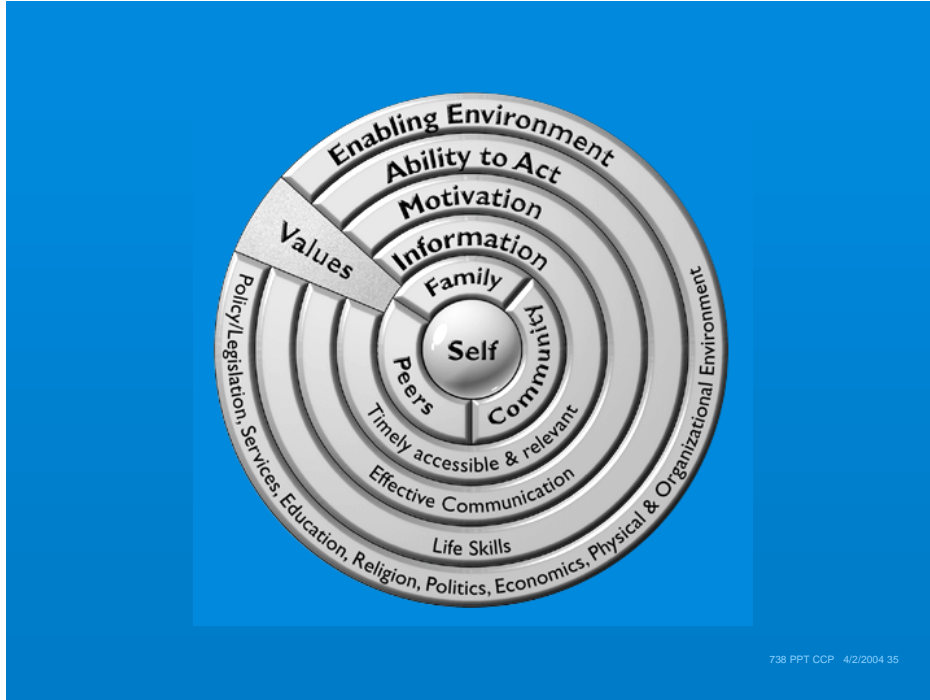
The Meena stories present many positive images of a girl succeeding, against odds, to gain equal treatment, love, care and respect.

The Meena communication package includes a series of stories produced in animation, radio and comic books. For facilitated discussions, there are discussion guides with each episode. The core materials are in five languages (English, Bangla, Hindi, Nepali and Urdu). These have been translated/dubbed in 17 South Asian languages as well as in Arabic, some South East Asian languages and European languages. The focus of the materials is on the development of psycho-social life skills in the girl child and her family to foster positive practices to enhance her growth and development. The support materials, including the Child-to-Child activities, also reinforce this concept of empowerment through exploring how the issues raised in the Meena stories relate to the audience's real lives, and what actions can they take to address these concerns.

These stories feature Meena as a sensitive, humorous and courageous nine year old South Asian girl. Rather than being portrayed as a passive victim, Meena is shown as vulnerable yet optimistic and proactive, aiming to promote a vision of girls as people of potential. MCI's research and creative team have sought to make Meena's stories highly entertaining, but also to reflect, at their core, the realities of girls' lives in South Asia. The name Meena was selected as one which spans the different cultures in the region. A whole cast of characters has been created for Meena's family and community. These characters, too, have been carefully researched.

While it is possible to present the female child as a victim, it is more important and effective to recognize her potential to contribute to her own, her family's and community's development, as an agent in promoting Child Rights. The MCI is an example of an “enter-education” strategy, which seeks to harness the drawing power of popular entertainment to convey educational/behavioural development messages. The Meena concept illustrates how creative and exciting story lines can be used to promote social issues in an appealing and provocative way. Meena has become a house hold name in this region and is recognized as a powerful symbol and advocate for Child Rights.

The complexity of factors required for successful behaviour change and positive behaviour development indicates the need for a multi-media approach, led by a medium which will capture the imagination and attention of a wide cross-section of the public, beginning with opinion setters and educators. This medium must be informative as well as provocative to generate discussions and participation. It must motivate through entertaining stories which are based on careful research into traditional and modern values and they must address the life skills and enabling environment factors which are crucial for behaviour development programming. These various factors are emerging from UNICEF-supported work globally, as a dynamic, new model to guide work in the area of girls' and women's empowerment, HIV/AIDS and any programme with a strong behaviour change or behaviour development component.



Ref: McKee, et al: *Involving People, Evolving Behaviour* (2000) Southbound Publications

In the MCI, attention has been paid to addressing all of these elements. The packages are designed for both broadcast and educational processes, formal and non-formal. These are extensively used throughout the region. Based on the regional packages, national adaptations and materials development have taken place in most countries. In Bangladesh, Meena stories are being incorporated into the formal and non formal school curriculum. In Pakistan, Meena and her brother Raju are positioned as Ambassadors for Children’s Rights. MCI has been systematically integrated as a communication resource into the work of different sectors: education, health, and girl child/child rights promotion. In India, the Meena series has been integrated as a communication tool within on-going education and communication programmes for nation-wide coverage. About 300,000 Nehru Yuva Youth Clubs at the block and district levels are disseminating Meena stories at the community level. In Nepal, strong partnership has been built with the media and other partners for dissemination. Meena is used as a key resource in initiating community discussion and reflection on child health, social development and gender issues.

2. SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENTS AND USAGE DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD (2000-2004)

The period of the grant saw efforts to achieve three key objectives. The first was to expand significantly the number of stories in the MCI, assist with sustainability in countries and have a credible evaluation of the project. It was considered that a key to sustainability was not only training on methodology but also implementation that took the Meena figure in new directions and allowed countries to adapt the MCI to their own needs. In the following pages there is an outline of the 19 new productions created using funds from this grant, an outline of the measures taken to assist sustainability and details of implementation strategies which includes an outline of what has happened in each of the region's countries.

A significant development for the future use of the project has been the signing of an MOU between UNICEF ROSA and the Asia arm of Turner TV, which broadcasts the Cartoon Network. Broadcasts of Meena films is due to begin in November 2004 as part of the station's contribution to International Children's Day.

This section will report on new productions, sustainability strategies and implementation processes, management of the MCI and the evaluation.

2.1 New Productions

New productions were considered essential if the MCI was to stay fresh and remain an attractive product for those working with children as well terrestrial and satellite broadcasters in the region. There result has been a significant expansion of the number of stories. UNICEF ROSA worked with the India and Bangladesh country offices of the agency to develop a total of 9 episodes dealing with Accident Prevention, Prevention of Low Birth Weight, Iodine Deficiency Disorders, Breast and Complimentary Feeding, Immunisation, Trafficking and Child Sexual Exploitation, Vitamin A awareness, Hand washing, Worms and Prevention.

These subjects reflect attempts to integrate the MCI into other programme activities which target priorities identified by the offices.

ROSA itself produced 3 full episodes with video, comic book, posters and discussion guides. **Learning to Love** is on Early Childhood Care and Development. **Strangers in the Village** deals with conflict and elementary peace building. Finally **Reaching Out** tackles the culturally challenging subject of stigmatisation because of HIV and AIDS and illustrates community care and support. Outlines of these stories can be found as an annex to this report.

In addition six one minute slots with supporting books and discussion guides aimed at assisting efforts to **accelerate girls' education** were produced. These episodes will be an integral part of ROSA's Fair Play for Girls campaign on girls' education and shows a return to the basic issues which led to the creation of the MCI.

Finally, one final 15 minute film with associated printed materials was awaiting post production by the end of the reporting period. This deals with the right of a girl child to play. This has struck

a remarkable chord during pre- testing as sport is an area where girls often feel they are excluded with undesirable consequences for their health, socialization and self esteem.

The productions mean that a total 19 films of varying lengths with supporting materials have been devised and produced from the current funding.

2.2 Sustainability

2.2.1 Introduction – historical perspective

Since MCI's inception, there have been discussions in favour of setting up Meena as a separate entity with UNICEF support. In 1995, Meena was moved to BRAC as a pilot step towards institutionalization in the future. The immediate objective was to use BRAC's channels to get Meena out to communities and help them to develop ownership of the MCI. The project operated successfully but as the mode of operation was not well defined, the project was finally returned to UNICEF ROSA 18 months later (June, 1996).

- NYHQ 1994 meeting: **the high level meeting recommended that the MCI should be transferred to an entity outside UNICEF while retaining its advocacy and programme communication potential. Corporate partnerships could be sought, especially for funding. The Meena coordinator's post at ROSA was created as an outcome of this meeting to manage this process.**
- **MCI Steering Committee Meeting in favour of institutionalization: 4-6 Feb. 1999 (5 COs):** the COs discussed the issue and the decision was to move MCI out of UNICEF.
- **RMT decisions/actions points-** Feb. 1999: RMT suggested possibilities of developing partnerships to broaden ownership and involvement.

2.2.2. In March/April 2002, exploration meetings (bi-lateral) were held with NGO and corporate partners regarding the sustainability of Meena beyond the current donor funding. Meetings were held with Nokia (Finland Office and Delhi), Birla, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Ambani, Mahendra, Bajaj, Modi, Cartoon Network (Turner), Hindustan Times, Archies, Light Box Moving Pictures in India; Brac and Grameen Bank in Bangladesh; Sesame Street (USA), and Soul City (South Africa) to discuss possible options of sustainability. Bilateral meetings were also held with UNICEF officers and country representatives in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan as well as with section heads and the Regional and Deputy Regional Directors of UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, and NYHQ. There was a consensus among all parties involved regarding the creation of a separate entity for Meena by forging meaningful partnerships with NGOs, Corporate and Government partners, and with support from UNICEF.

2.2.3. In mid 2002, new ideas regarding the sustainability of Meena were discussed and developed. It was felt that with Meena's popularity within and outside of UNICEF it would be worthwhile to keep the brand within UNICEF and make it sustainable by integrating it into all country programmes with new vigour and wider visions.

In October 2002, a Task Force was established under the leadership of Morten Giersing to further explore the idea of sustainability. Fresh discussions were held at the regional and country levels. The

decision was to create country level entities if there was a need. Bangladesh is still exploring this matter.

2.2.4. The philosophy of Meena from the very beginning has been integration in sectoral programmes and forging partnerships for wider implementation. This approach has been adopted by many COs, so far. The current thinking is to strengthen this approach and use Meena as a strategy for promoting girls' education. As a result, an MOU has been signed with Turner to broadcast Meena series (12 episodes) all over the region in English, Hindi and Tamil languages. Turner is also considering launching of the six Meena education spots. Negotiations are on-going with Asian Cricket Corporation (ACC) to support acceleration of girls' education by using Meena as a role model for girls' empowerment.

2.2.5. In order to ensure quality control and to protect Meena brand at minimal cost, an oversight Board made up of all the country Representatives in the region under the chair of the Regional Director or the Deputy Regional Director, which would hold meetings at the times of the regional Management Team (RMT) meetings, has been formed to discuss issues important to sustainability. The primary responsibilities of the board will be to protect the "Brand value" of the MCI, while also seeking opportunities for its expansion. ROSA will retain a role through the chairmanship and the secretariat being provided by the regional Communication Section.

Capacity building for research and effective utilization-Training of Trainers (TOTs): Researchers' training were held in SriLanka, Maldives, Vietnam and Laos in 2001 and 2003.

Training of Trainers (TOT) for effective utilization of Meena materials and to develop implementation strategies were held in (2002-2003) Bhutan, Sri Lanka Laos and Vietnam. Two trainers from Maldives have also been trained. Funds were channeled to the country offices for implementation from this grant.

2.2.6 Implementation activities

In 2001, UNICEF appointed Meena as the spokesperson for children's Rights at the Global Movement for Children initiative. This builds on Meena being appointed as the official "ambassador" of the December 1998 International Children's Day of Broadcast - an event reaching more than 2,000 broadcasters world-wide. International broadcasters have been offered the Meena series in return for dubbing Meena into local languages.

In addition, a number of National Committees in Europe have dubbed Meena films for broadcasting in children's programmes and for education for development. Most notably Canada's UNICEF National Committee has published facilitators' guidelines for organizing group discussion and Child-to-Child activities for Canadian school children and the UNICEF UK Committee plans to develop a teaching pack to accompany the series.

A Meena website (<http://www.unicef.org/meena>) was also set up designed by New York's prestigious Parsons School of design. This site was the frontispiece of UNICEF's global web site from August to November 1998 highlighting Meena's high profile within UNICEF globally.

2.2.7 Grants from the Norway Funding to countries

In this phase of the project UNICEF Regional Office provided funds from the Norway grant to countries for the implementation of the MCI and to help sustainability. There follows a brief explanation of activities in each country during the reporting period and the amount given in 2003.

- **BANGLADESH**

Bangladesh received \$ 67,000 from the Norway grant

In addition to the on-going activities, Bangladesh country office (BCO) concentrated on four things:

- 1) Development and production of Meena spots for television and radio based on existing Meena films for electronic media.
- 2) Development, finalization and production of Meena story books for schools.
- 3) Development of Meena stories on girl child education and early childhood development.
- 4) Interactive Forum Theatre on girl's education and IECD.

Details are as follows:

1) Development and production of Meena spots for television and radio based on existing Meena films for electronic media

Meena episodes are very popular with the young children as well as adults in Bangladesh. The duration of each episode of existing films is about 15-20 minutes. It is not always easy to broadcast the full Meena episodes in television due to constraints of prime time. Therefore, BCO produced six TV and six radio spots based on the existing films.

Process:

- Workshop on development of scripts for both radio and television.
- Draft production of spots in VHS
- Pre-testing of scripts and spots among children, teachers, mothers and fathers in Jamalpur and Rangpur Districts
- Finalisation of scripts
- Production of spots

Outputs:

- One pretesting report
- Six TV spots and six Radio spots

The spots are now ready for extensive screening for promotion of girls' Rights.

2) Development, finalization and production of Meena story books for schools

National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) reviewed, edited and finalised 10 storybooks on Meena based on the English version. In addition to these 10 storybooks, NCTB has developed four new Meena stories on girls' education issues.

Process

Through a three day workshop organised by NCTB 10 Meena storybooks were translated from English to Bangla. Five more new Meena. storybooks were developed. Script writer, Teachers, NCTB specialists, PTI instructors participated in the storybook reviewing and editing and the story development workshops. The Chairman of NCTB approved all the books for printing.

The 10 Meena storybooks will be distributed in all the primary schools of the selected IDEAL districts. Each Government Primary School will get 5 sets and Community Schools, Satellite Schools and Registered Primary Schools will get 2 sets of Meena storybooks. The later category of schools have less number of students.

These books will be used by students of primary schools as supplementary reading materials. It is expected that these books will help the children in joyful study in the classroom.

Outputs

- 10 Meena storybooks reviewed, edited and produced
 1. Count your Chickens
 2. Too Young to Marry
 3. Saving a Life
 4. Who's afraid of the Bully?
 5. Will Meena Leave School?
 6. Dividing the Mango
 7. Take Care of Girls
 8. Say No to Dowry
 9. I Love School
 10. It's got to be a boy

- Additional five new stories have been developed on the following issues
 1. Need to attend school regularly
 2. Benefits of completing the school cycle
 3. Girls can do
 4. Moyna (a girl) will go to School
 5. No early Marriage

3) Development of Meena stories on Integrated Childhood Development (IECD)

Bangladesh Shishu Academy (BSA-children's Academy) organised workshops to develop Meena stories and rhymes on Integrated Early Childhood Development and produced three Meena stories and one rhyme book. The stories are for caregivers and students and rhymes are for children. The following professionals participated at the workshop:

Script writers

Story composers

Rhymes Composers

Artist/ Painters

School Teachers

NCTB Specialists

Bangladesh Shishu Academy (BSA) officials

Key issues addressed in the stories and rhymes:

Physical growth and mental development of children

Enabling environment for children

Girls and boys are equal.

Environment of family is the main factor for children's mental development.

Bangladesh Shishu Academy organized (during Meena Day, 2003, celebration) nationwide competitions on story and essay writings among children and teachers. The best stories and essays will be published in a booklet later in 2004. The title for story writing competition for the children was *Shikhita Kanna Shato Guna Dhannya* (Educated Girl has many qualities) and the title for essay writing competition for the teachers was *The role of teachers in attracting girls for secondary education*. Essay competition was held only for Secondary School Teachers.

Three age groups of children participated in the story writing competition. Group A: 10-12 years old, Group B: 13-15 years old and Group C: 15-18 years old.

The competition was held in two stages: District level and National Level. Children submitted their stories at the District BSA office and then the best three stories were selected from each of the three groups. The best three stories were then sent to the Central BSA Office. The district level offices organised prizes, mostly books for the best three stories. Teachers mailed their articles directly to the Director, BSA Dhaka. The Central BSA office selected the best stories and awarded the prizes.

Outputs

A. Storybooks:

1. Meena and young Bulu
2. Joyful play
3. Everybody is Meena's favourite

B. A Rhyme Book:

1. Girls and boys are equal

C. Best stories

Raw material for Meena stories and booklets.

4) Interactive forum theatre on girls' education and IECD

IDEAL Project of Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) organized interactive theatre to enhance awareness of communities including teachers, guardians, School Management Committee members. The idea was to illustrate the importance and benefits of education for girls and to highlight good practice in early childhood care and development.

Process:

1. Script development through workshops
2. Planning meetings between District Primary Education Officials, UNICEF Project Coordinator and Theatre group members
3. Shows/performances at Upazila levels

Renowned theatre professionals facilitated the workshops and helped to develop scripts. The key messages of the theatre are: physical growth and mental development of children (0- 5 years) and improvement of girls' education. Eighteen theatre groups (2 members from each group) from 16 districts have been trained on interactive forum theatre.

Three performances were organised in each upazilla over a period of three months and designed in such a way that audiences internalize the issues and messages. It is expected that after three exposures they will begin to think about what their roles are in resolving problems.

Outputs:

Seven scripts developed and shows performed

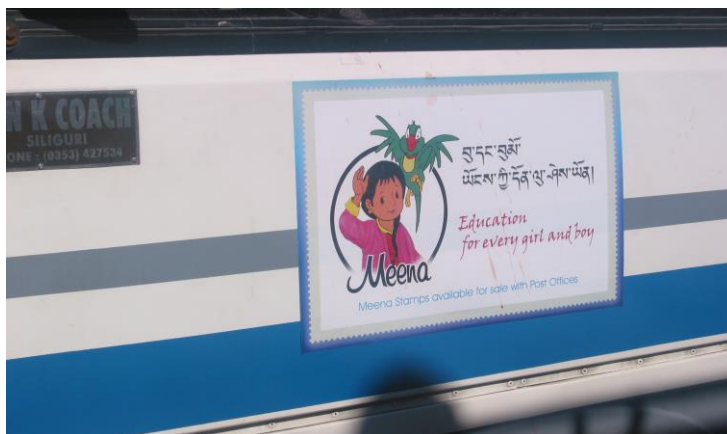
1. Golapi (name of a girl),
2. Amar Meye (My Daughter).
3. Kanamachi Bho Bho (Need for play),
4. Hatey Mehendi Jhokmok (The Bride's Henna)
5. Shwapnopuri (A Dream land)
6. Ichcha Puran (A Wish Come True)
7. Fulir Swapno (Fuli's dream)

- **BHUTAN**

As part of the girls' education acceleration programme, in mid-2003, UNICEF Bhutan received \$ 92,600 from the regional office (ROSA) from the current Norway grant. This aimed to use Meena to support activities to raise awareness on girls' education. The fund has been utilised to support a series of activities;

1. **Printing Meena postage stamps and posters:** UNICEF in collaboration with the Bhutan Post designed and printed 10,000 sheets of Meena postage stamps and 5,000 copies of Meena posters. The Meena postage stamps and posters contain the key message **“Educate Every Girl and Boy”**., In a land where it is difficult to spread messages the stamps have been sold at every post office. UNICEF also worked with the Road Safety and Transport Authority (RSTA) to disseminate Meena messages by placing 5,000 Meena Posters in 45 buses and more than 2,000 taxis operating throughout Bhutan.
2. **Using Meena to promote girls' education in the mass media campaign:** Two events organised by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in 2003. One was the celebration of the International Literacy Day (8 September) and the second was the launching of the **State of the World's Children report 2004** (11 December 2003). For this event, whose theme was girls' education, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education developed and printed four supplementary pages in the national weekly newspaper. The pages contained Meena messages related to girls' education, human-interest stories and the importance of literacy and girls' education in supporting the development of Bhutan as the key to achieving gross national happiness. The Bhutan Broadcasting Service also ran news coverage of these two important events.
3. **Using Meena to promote girls' education and female literacy through the non-formal education (NFE) system:** One of the most effective strategies used in Bhutan to promote and accelerate girls' education is to work through the non-formal education system.

Twelve thousand five hundred copies of the five different titles of Meena comic books have been translated into Dzongkha (the national language) and printed. These books will be distributed to all non-formal education learners in the country. These books will not only be used to support NFE basic and post literacy courses, but also to generate discussions among teachers, local authorities and non-formal education learners, 70% of whom are women. The discussions will focus on: why girls should be educated, how to accelerate girls' enrollment and how to eliminate gender disparity in education in Bhutan.



In 2002, a Meena Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop was held with technical support from ROSA. The participants came from the government ministries (information, education, health) and UNICEF-Bhutan. A joint utilization plan was developed and being implemented. 20,000 comic books in English were also printed and distributed in schools.

- **INDIA**

The India country office received \$ 54, 500 from the current Norway grant. This was primarily used to institutionalize Meena as a tool in Bihar Education Project and for schools in Dholpur and Jhalawar districts.

Bihar

Institutionalisation of Meena in two districts covered by the Mahila Samakhya Programme

Some facts

- Bihar has the lowest female literacy rate in the country.

- Bihar has a very high school drop-out rate for girls -- as many as 58 per cent of girls drop out between classes I and V while out of the remaining lot, as many as 36 per cent drop out before they complete middle school.

Why Mahila Samakhya?

The story of Lalita Kumari from Bihar's Sitamarhi district, featured in UNICEF's flagship publication *State of the World's Children 2004*, is the story of millions of girls of Bihar, though they are not as fortunate as Lalita. However, UNICEF has felt that there is a tremendous potential for bringing about change at the community level.

When one looks for institutions that have the capacity to bring about sweeping changes at the community level, the Mahila Samakhya (MS), set up under the Bihar Education Project (BEP) more than a decade ago, stands out.

The Mahila Samakhya is an organisation that has the unique mandate of promoting girls' education through women's empowerment at the community level. At the community level, the institutions set up by Mahila Samakhya help in advocating with the community on the need to educate children, especially girls. Most of the centres for older girls are non-formal centres which teach life-skills and give a foundation course in literacy.

Over a period of time, Meena as a tool in promoting gender equity and equality has been used substantially in the Mahila Samakhya programme. Through stage shows, muppets and other activities, Meena had already gained widespread popularity in the state. UNICEF, however, felt if there was one institution where substantial inputs needed to be made for use of Meena, it was the Mahila Samakhya. The most significant reason for this is that a large number of girls who come to its centres do so after overcoming resistance from the family. Even when they are in the centres, there is a pressure that they go back and work at home instead of going to school or the MS centre. Meena, to these girls, offers a sense of direction and hope.

However, what also needs to be mentioned that although Meena is extremely popular, and evokes very strong emotions among students and teachers alike, it could not be institutionalised in the Mahila Samakhya programme earlier. The reasons for this included lack of resources, both technical (human) and financial.

However, with the possibility of support being available for institutionalisation of Meena, discussions were held with the Mahila Samakhya and they expressed an interest in taking up the project. They appreciated the efforts of Unicef and the Government of Norway in making this support available.

Implementation of the Project

The project was planned in a manner that leads to institutionalisation of Meena in the selected districts. While on one hand orders were placed for the flip books (a very useful training aid), big books and small books (for self-learning), funds were transferred to the

Mahila Samakahya for holding training programmes for its cadre of programme implementers -- the sahyoginis, sahelis, among others.

To begin with, a state-level workshop was organised in state capital, Patna, by the Mahila Smakahya with a view to discussing the effectiveness of Meena as a tool for promoting girls' education.

At the workshop, a head of the district unit of the Mahila Samakhya said that Meena had been a role model for many girls in the villages of her district. She added, "Even though Meena was a fictional character, she has always been looked up to."

A small working group comprising UNICEF officials and Mahila Samakhya Members prepared a training module for the upcoming workshops.

Once this was accomplished, one "Training of Trainers" workshop were held in each of the two districts. With adequate number of trainers (16) ready in the two districts, a total of 16 workshops were organised in both Sitamarhi and Gaya, which covered 625 teachers (sahelis, sahyoginis, etc.) running the Mahila Samakhya centres.

Output

1. Training on process, concept and use of 'Meena' materials to achieve the objectives. People trained:
 - 6 master trainers for Gaya and 10 for Sitamarhi
 - 620 teachers

Rajasthan

Some facts

The sex ratio is not favourable to girls in Rajasthan. While the overall sex ratio is 922, the sex ratio in the age group 0-6 years is 906.

- Over 28.1% girls remain out of school in rural areas.
- The dropout rate in Primary schools is 52.5%. (The same for girls in rural areas although not available, is expected to be much higher).
- Only 5% of schools in Rajasthan are provided with water and sanitation facilities. This has been one of the major factors for high dropout rate among girls.
- Retention of girls is only 40% by the time they reach Class V.
- There are fewer schools for girls - only 983 as against 1954 for boys.
- Only 27% of teachers in primary schools are women.
- The teacher student ratio is highly unbalanced at 1:87.

The government of Rajasthan and UNICEF are making special efforts to eliminate gender gaps and disparities in education among specific communities and hard to reach groups, with special focus on girls. Promoting the concept of optimum quality package for elementary education, as a tool for retention of students in schools is another area UNICEF is trying to address.

Steps taken

Meena Communication Initiative has been initiated through Education project (Lok Jumbish) in 13 Districts of Rajasthan. Earlier Meena CDs were given to the schools. Norway funds helped design the cover and inlay card of the CDs; and translate the creditlines of 12 films in Hindi.

Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education For All) UNICEF has provided 'Meena print material for the 500 schools in each of the UNICEF's two focus Education districts - Dholpur and Jhalawar.

The teachers, Principals, DIETS and the NGO's responsible for social mobilization, in the two districts were oriented on the strategy and methodology to use Meena.

Meena proved an effective tool for

- discussing gender issues and discrimination against the girl child
- discussing child rights issues
- communicating messages on importance of girls' education, ORS, nutrition, combating eve teasing, age of marriage, prevention of child labour, myth of boy preference, caring for girls, HIV/AIDS
- creating awareness on life skills

Output

1. Training on process, concept and use of 'Meena' materials to achieve the objectives.

People trained:

- 80 Master Trainers
- 160 Cluster Resource Centre Functionaries and NGO representatives
- 80 Teachers

2. 'Meena' print material given as follows:

- One set of Meena print materials per school given for a total of 1000 schools in Jhalawar and Dholpur districts (500 per district)
- 122 sets given to Rajasthan State Institute of Educational Research and Training

• MALDIVES

The UNICEF office in Male received \$ 18,000 from UNICEF ROSA from the current Norway grant for implementation:

- 1) Translations and duplications of Meena videos and books
- 2) Launch
- 3) Project support-local coordinator

- **NEPAL**

UNICEF Nepal Country Office received \$40,000 from the regional office in 2003 from the current Norway grant. The funds were utilized for two activities:

The first activity (\$20,000) comprised the inclusion of Meena's *Three Wishes* (on use of safe water and sanitation) into Back-to School kits for a Quick Impact Programme for children in the Mid and Far-West of Nepal where there is an increasing vulnerability of households and communities due to recent conflict and instability.

The second activity (\$20,000) comprised inclusion of *Meena: Reaching Out* (on HIV/AIDS-support and community care) into UNICEF Out-of-school and Urban Out-of-School programmes.

Some funds were also used for the printing of booklets in Nepali. The booklets are about to be received from the printer and will then be used as follows.

1. Inclusion of Meena into Back-to-School Kits

UNICEF Nepal Country Office and WFP are collaborating on a Quick Impact Programme in eight districts in the Mid and Far-West of Nepal where there is increasing vulnerability of households and communities due to recent conflict and instability. Part of the UNICEF support involves the provision of school and student Back-to-School Kits.

UNICEF Nepal Child and Women's Environment Section is planning to distribute the *Meena's Three Wishes* booklets (on the theme of safe water and sanitation) in about 400 schools in 87 VDCs of nine districts (Humla, Dolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot, Mugu, Bajura, Bhajang, Kalilot and Jumla), covering approximately 40,000 children. With the books, will be a bar of soap to all targeted children in these districts to encourage proper hand washing after defecation and before eating/touching food.

2. Introduction of Meena into UNICEF HIV/AIDS education activities

UNICEF Nepal HIV/AIDS section plans to reach 15 districts, through students in UNICEF-funded Out-of-School Programmes and Urban Out of School Programmes. *Reaching Out* booklets will be distributed only after young people have had some kind of information on HIV/AIDS through UNICEF's HIV and young people strategies. The booklets will then be used as supplementary material as well as for discussions. Orientation on Out-of-School facilitators will start in 2004.

Reaching Out comic book provides a very useful child- and family-friendly addition to the materials being developed, as it is concerned with the issue of acceptance, care and support in the community.

- **PAKISTAN**

UNICEF Islamabad received \$ 70,000 from the current Norway grant for implementation in 2003.

Meena Communication Initiative which was commenced in Pakistan in 1991, has been continued during the year 2003 and 2004. Main focus remained on the Brothers Join Meena (BJM) project which was launched in 2000, in collaboration with the Balochistan Boy Scouts Association. The BJM project was further expanded in the year 2003 to one more province and various new districts. The project now encompasses 23 out of 26 districts of Balochistan, 6 districts of Sindh and 3 districts of Punjab with the involvement of more than 40,000 Boy Scouts of the respective Boy Scouts Associations.

As part of communication strategies different innovative approaches have been applied to use Meena material in on-going or new communication campaigns. A substantial amount of new Meena communication material was designed and produced for several awareness raising activities for different programmes.

Brothers Join Meena Project

Under the Brothers Join Meena project, the Boy Scouts make extensive use of the Meena material (posters, comic books, stickers, badges, folders etc.) in order to disseminate information among the target audience with following objectives in mind:

- To promote and protect the rights of children with particular focus on girls' rights
- To overcome low literacy rate amongst girls by encouraging parents to get them enrolled in schools
- To increase awareness about immunization coverage of children up to one year of age
- To urge people to build latrines in their homes to stop frequent outbreaks of disease and to improve basic hygienic conditions especially for girls and women whose mobility is restricted



Scouts marching in support of girls' education

Achievements

Brothers Join Meena has been nothing less than a breakthrough since its commencement in different districts. Since its launch in 2000, the programme has many important achievements on its credit.

- Due to its tremendous success in 13 districts of Balochistan, the programme was extended to 13 more districts of the province involving more Boy Scouts as agents of change.
- Following its positive outcome in Balochistan, the programme was replicated in 6 districts of Sindh and 3 districts of Punjab.
- In addition to creating awareness about girls' education, immunization coverage and urging people to build latrines, Boy Scouts are also playing an important role in creating awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention under Brothers Join Meena programme.
- Under Brothers Join Meena, a number of activities have been carried out in the programme districts pointing towards a steady positive change in the lives of children, particularly girls.
- Since the start of the project thousands of Boy Scouts have been trained and hundreds of teachers and prominent personalities have been sensitized about issues related to the programme.
- BJM was in the international spotlight for the global launch of UNICEF's flagship publication *The State of the World's Children 2004* held in Geneva on 10th December 2003 as a 14 year old Boy Scout Abid Ali from Kalat represented the world's children and his country as one of the two young people invited to the event.

Key Outcomes of BJM (2000-2003)

▪ Homes visited by 32,000 Boy Scouts	300,000
▪ Girls enrolled in schools	18,618
▪ Boys enrolled in schools	12,464
▪ Children received immunization	16,895
▪ Latrines constructed	12,796

• SRI LANKA

UNICEF Sri Lanka received 41, 700 from ROSA from the current Norway grant for implementation in 2003.

The Meena outreach strategy in Sri Lanka was to utilise a multi-media, multi-channel approach, using the cartoon films, facilitator's guides, posters, leaflets, comic books and other interpersonal communication channels. In addition, Meena materials and concepts were integrated into other UNICEF assisted programmes. The support materials helped reinforcement to a process of empowerment by promoting dynamic group dialogues and action. The MCI aimed to raise awareness through discussions of the issues, and helped communities and families to fulfil the rights of the child to the best of their abilities.

Policy makers and programme implementers, NGO partners, the media, the private sector and other key allies were introduced to the Meena Communication Initiative.

Orientation and training workshops were organised for partners to use the materials effectively in the field. The materials are being used for education, training, advocacy and social mobilisation.

In addition, Meena was integrated into ongoing programmes to ensure long term sustainability of the initiative. This was achieved in the Child Rights Education programme and the Mine Risk Education (MRE) programmes very effectively. Both CRC education and MRE use Meena as the role model for educating children, with a spill-over effect to adult education.

Activities

- **Training of Trainers (TOTs):** As a means of building the capacity of extension workers for effective utilisation of Meena materials with an understanding of Life skills based education, approximately 600 trainers were trained to work with children and young people. The people trained included all the Health Education Officers in Sri Lanka, the Child Rights promotion officers in the North and the East, the Probation officers in the North and the East, Leading international NGOs such as Plan International and Save the Children, and other local community based NGOs.
- **Meena Orientation workshops:** Community level orientation workshops were held for NGO personnel, government partners, media and those interested in promoting the MCI. The workshops introduced the MCI to the participants and to promote discussions on the relevant problems addressed in the episodes. The workshops also helped to further disseminate Meena at the community level. Approximately, 1000 people participated in the workshops which were organised in different areas in the country.
- **Public awareness activities:** Over 50 public events were organised throughout the country to introduce the initiative, raise awareness among children and young people regarding issues addressed in Meena. As a result of these programmes, children organised themselves into groups to go into the community and conduct “Talk Shops” with other children to discuss issues that concerned them and also tried to derive their own solutions to these issues.
- **Mine Risk Education activities:** To make Meena sustainable in Sri Lanka, the concept was integrated into the Mine Risk Awareness (MRE) programme. MRE education materials is using Meena as a role model to advice children and advocate with children as well as adults on the importance of staying safe in areas vulnerable to Mine Risks. Posters, Billboards and school time tables were produced to take the messages to children. Main access routes in areas affected by mines have large billboards creating awareness on Mines and dangerous areas.
- **Child Rights Education:** In order to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) more accessible/understandable to children a child friendly summarized version of the CRC was produced and printed using Meena as a communication tool.

In order to further integrate Meena into Child Rights education a year planner was also developed and printed.

- **Printing 3 Meena comic books :**The comic books were developed based on locally relevant issues such as Iron Deficiency Anaemia, use of Iodised Salt and Prevention of Domestic Child Labour. These books were printed for distribution to school libraries and community centres.
- **Meena on National Media:** Due to the high level of acceptance of Meena, the National Television Station (Sri Lanka Rupervarhini Corporation) is currently broadcasting all Meena films free of cost on their children’s belt. Two other private television channels, too, have approached UNICEF with a request for the materials for broadcast- free of cost.
- **Printing Meena leaflet and facilitators’ guides:** Due to the wide acceptance of the Meena Initiative, and the large number of trained field staff, a need arose to reprint the existing facilitators’ guides.
- **Duplication of Meena films:** For use in the field the Meena films were reproduced in VHS tapes.
- **Meena sub-masters from India (Light Box and Toonz Animation):** The sub-masters for the new Meena films produced by the regional office were procured for Sri Lanka. These films will be dubbed into the languages of Sri Lanka in 2004.



Meena Billboard on Mine Risk Education

2.3 Outreach and Impact Evaluation

A full evaluation of MCI was undertaken in August 2003- February 2004. Local agencies worked under the guidance of an international evaluator in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The evaluation had two components:

- Assessment at the country level in the above mentioned four countries. In Nepal a survey has already been conducted so the evaluation will be limited to qualitative investigations.
- Synthesis of findings at country levels.

The purpose was to provide an understanding of the outcomes of the MCI in each country and its efficiency as implemented in the country. It will also examine the costs and potentials and options for sustainability and scaling up.

The primary and immediate users of the evaluation will be the UNICEF offices and donors (who have sponsored the MCI) and the partners in the countries who have invested considerable efforts and resources in implementing the MCI in their respective programmes. The evaluation will recommend decisions on next steps of the MCI particularly looking at relevance, cost efficiency, effectiveness and future sustainability. The evaluation will also provide a baseline for any new approaches, tools and training strategies, that might be introduced as a result of the evaluation which can be measured in a few years' time. The evaluation will further assess the outcomes of the MCI and the efficiency of its process. It will also assess the issues of future sustainability based on an examination of the costs of the initiative and institutional options. The three broad aspects to be evaluated are:

- Outcomes in terms of coverage, awareness and knowledge, and life skills acquisition
- Efficiency of processes in communicating the messages to the identified target populations including partnerships
- Costs

2.3.1 Key findings of the regional evaluation

(See appendix 3 for details)

“The evaluation’s findings confirm the potential of the MCI to communicate children’s rights particularly girls’ rights, to South Asian audiences, and in so doing, to create awareness, promote acquisition of life skills, and encourage change in life skills practices”- *Evaluation of the Meena communication Initiative, A synthesis of country level evaluations conducted in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan by Dr Paul Chesterton, Australian Catholic University, April, “2004.*

The findings highlight the importance of tailoring the means of communication to meet the specific needs and contexts of the target audiences, the need for multi-dimensional strategic planning that addresses infrastructural and cultural elements as well as those directly to (behaviour change) communication, and the significance of cross-programme planning.

The implementation of the MCI is very different in each country. The intricate strategies used in the field and the contextual factors and procedures adopted added to the complexity of its utilization. The efficiency of implementation varied across the region, being affected by

factors such as differential access to resources and expertise, availability of training of participants, and accessibility of target audiences. Examples of multiplication and replication within the MCI's implementation were demonstrated, and the value of this was confirmed, subject to an assessment of the degree of fit with the newly intended audience's needs and context.

“Key factors facilitating implementation have been identified as the dedicated commitment of key players within and outside of UNICEF, **and the inherent appeal of the product, due in large to its underpinning research and development processes.** Constraining factors were identified as gaps in UNICEF organizational awareness and application of the MCI, shortage of funds, limits on availability of materials, non-availability of materials in some local languages, and local security, transport and infrastructure problems.”- *Evaluation of the Meena communication Initiative, A synthesis of country level evaluations conducted in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan by Dr Paul Chesterton, Australian Catholic University, April, “2004.*

The evaluation seeks to provide a clear and detailed understanding of the implementation of the MCI in the four countries, along with the factors that have helped and constrained its operation. This in turn is seen as providing an informed basis on which to make judgements about the MCI, using the following criteria:

- Relevance for specific contexts
- Effectiveness in terms of reaching its intended audiences and meeting its objectives
- Efficiency of implementation in terms of its financial costs compared to observed short term outcomes
- Capacity for expansion
- Sustainability

The evaluation approach indicates that the MCI has the potential to deliver its intended outcomes. The evaluation seeks to test this by examining the implementation processes adopted as the means for achieving this potential, and the factors influencing the nature and effects of these processes.

Separate organizations were contracted by UNICEF-ROSA to undertake the evaluations in each of the four countries. The organizations were ACNielsen Bangladesh, Centre for Media Studies India (CMS), ACNielsen Nepal and Gallup Pakistan. A regional evaluation consultant was also contracted (Dr Paul Chesterton, Australian Catholic University), to provide technical guidance to the country studies and to synthesise the findings from the individual country evaluations in order to distil the lessons that emerged.

Quantitative data collection procedure: For the evaluation outcomes questions on *reach, awareness and knowledge, life skills practices, and perceptions and attitudes towards Meena*, a household survey instrument was developed. The instrument took the form of a structured interview schedule for adults and children in selected households, with most of the questions having a series of pre-specified response options and a small number being of an open-ended nature. The specific information that was being sought corresponded, in a more detailed fashion, to the key evaluation questions. Accordingly, the schedule included questions on the

respondent's characteristics and background (age, gender, education, capacity to read and write), life skill practices, awareness and knowledge of Meena and the Meena messages, exposure to and preferences for various communication media, and perceptions of and attitudes towards Meena.

The household survey was planned for Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. In the case of Nepal, it was decided to use the findings from a survey that had already been conducted there in 2002 (Ref: Valley Research Group, 2003).

Qualitative data collection procedure: To complement the household survey, a series of focus group discussions was conducted, focusing on awareness and understanding, appreciation and application of the MCI messages. The focus group discussions were supplemented by other strategies to elicit the views of people involved in or affected by the MCI. These included interviews, workshops and meetings. A set of guidelines and key questions was developed for each of the focus group discussions and related strategies.

In general, the discussions and related strategies were undertaken in the areas selected for the quantitative data collection. In Nepal, however, as previously reported, the quantitative data findings were drawn from a survey that had already been conducted there in 2002, rather than from a concurrent household survey.

In Bangladesh, two districts were selected for the household survey from each of the country's six divisions. In total, the sample comprised 1202 adults, 1200 children aged from 7 to 11 years, and 1200 children aged from 12 to 18 years. In each of these categories, the sample was split equally between males and females.

In Bangladesh, focus group discussions involved 40 people, comprising 12 parents, 12 adolescents aged from 12 to 18 years, nine teachers and community leaders and seven retailers. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 150 people, comprising 50 parents, 51 adolescents, 29 teachers and community leaders and 20 retailers.

In India, the three States of Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were selected for the evaluation. In total the sample comprised 2324 adults and 2324 children aged from 10-18 years.

In India focus group discussions were held with 10 of the teachers trained to use Meena in Uttar Pradesh; 20 trainers and trainees in Uttar Pradesh and Orissa; 30 Government Officials at State, District and Block levels across the three states; and two to four UNICEF communication and program officials in each of the states. Four MCI Partner Workshops involving Government, NGO and UNICEF representatives were also conducted to obtain feedback on MCI implementation and sustainability. Three day-long workshops were held in the participating states, while the fourth was at a national level and of two days duration.

In Pakistan in total the sample comprised 1, 512 adults and 1,887 children aged from 12-20 years. Among these were 200 Boy Scouts and 82 Girl Guides. The sample was drawn from four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan).

In Pakistan, focus group discussions were held with a total of 151 parents, children, community leaders and teachers. A further participatory technique was used in Pakistan, involving a group of children from grades 8, 9 and 10 in each of two schools in Islamabad. In each group, the children watched and evaluated an episode of Meena, with discussion

being led by a member of the group. The research agency observed and recorded details of the discussion.

In case of Nepal, it was decided to use the findings from a survey that had already been conducted there in 2002.

To supplement the questionnaires focusing on the evaluation *implementation* and *potential for expansion and sustainability* questions some key informant discussions were also held with people at different levels of implementation of the MCI

A number of key questions were identified for each of the four main focus areas, as detailed below.

2.3.2 Outcomes of the MCI

- **Reach**

- a. What were the geographic/administrative areas in which the communication campaign was carried out and what is the size of the target population?
- b. Within the targeted areas what is the proportion and profile of population reached by the different communication channels?

- **Awareness and knowledge**

- a. To what extent have the children and women gained knowledge of intended messages from the initiative?
- b. Which social or age groups were less knowledgeable and why? Are there gender differentials?

- **Life skills practices**

- a. In relation to messages communicated by Meena (as contained in the materials disseminated in the respective communities) what practices are seen? Are any of these different for groups who were not exposed to Meena?
- b. What are the reasons for the adoption or non adoption of behaviour change as intended by the MCI?

- **Perceptions of and attitudes towards Meena**

Among those exposed to Meena,

- a. What was the level of receptivity to different materials and channels of communication e.g TV, radio, facilitated discussion, videos etc.?
- b. Which materials and means of communication were the more popular?
- c. To what extent was Meena character perceived as a role model?
- d. What were the endearing features of Meena character and the other characters?
- e. What modifications are needed for better acceptability and memorability of message?
- f. What materials were considered useful and what were actually used? How?
- g. How is Meena rated as an entertainment programme compared to other entertainment or educational programmes?
- h. Have stories stimulated interpersonal communication?

- **Implementation of the MCI**

- a. What were the key steps in implementing the initiative from decision to implement to completion or if on going up to current status?
- b. What were the decision making processes that determined the scope and approaches for implementation?
- c. How participatory and owned were these steps?
- d. How efficiently were these steps carried out in terms of conforming to planned time lines and coverage?
- e. To what extent were capacities developed in UNICEF and among partners for life skills development ?
- f. Are there cases of multiplication/ replication after the introductory phases and if so what is the nature and extent?
- g. What factors facilitated the implementation and how?
- h. What factors constrained the implementation as planned and how?

- **Costs**

- a. What were the costs involved and how do they compare with achieved results in terms of outcomes?
- b.

Potential for expansion and sustainability

- a. What are the examples where the initiative has been replicated/multiplied by partners or others such as media organisations?
- b. What is the scope for expansion and what are the potential modalities in terms of communication approaches, partners etc for such expansion?
- c. What lessons can be learnt from implementation that was successful and what were the commonalities of efforts that failed, if any?
- d. What are some of the suggestions that have emerged from the evaluation in terms of alternative ways in which Meena could be used for promoting the rights of children and women?

The evaluation points out that the pattern of MCI implementation in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan has been a mixture of nationwide dissemination through national television and radio presentations, and specific strategies targeted at particular groups and/or geographical areas within each country. The timing elements of the pattern have varied, with audience access to materials and activities beginning at different times across the four countries, and specific interventions operating for a variety of time periods, with some subsequently repeated.

In Bangladesh, the screening and broadcasting of Meena episodes on national television and radio, the distribution of one million Meena comic books to primary schools in 1993, and the hosting of Meena events in urban centers by Shishu Academies, represent interventions pitched at different scales and types of sometimes overlapping audiences. A similar theme emerges in India, where a focus on exposure through national mass media has been accompanied by state-specific interventions such as the Meena Muppet Road Show in Bihar and Meena Clubs in Orissa.

In India and Nepal, particular geographic areas were selected for intensive implementation of the MCI. In India, these were reported to comprise the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, with some sporadic activity taking place in West Bengal and Assam. In Nepal, the focus on district level implementation has covered more than half (42) of the country's 75 districts. In Bangladesh, the use of a mass mobilization campaign essentially meant that the whole country was targeted from as early as 1992. Population figures for that period indicate a target girl children (7-18 years) population of over 17 million and an all women target population of over 57 million. A similar process occurred in Pakistan, from 1998 onwards.

The findings from the **Bangladesh** household survey shows regarding who had heard, seen or read about Meena from each of various sources, television emerged as an almost universal source for these children (identified by 96.9% of the sample), with story books identified by about one quarter and stickers and wall paintings each by about one tenth.

Comparative data from the **Indian** household questionnaire data shows that of the total sample of 4,648, around 18% (842) indicated that they were aware of Meena. Each of these 842 respondents was asked to state their source(s) of exposure to Meena. The aggregated responses from all 842 respondents reveal the prime importance of television as a source (61%), with two other sources, story books and street theatre indicated by at least 20% of respondents.

The data from the **Pakistan** study, again point to the importance of television as a major source of exposure to Meena. The significance of television was reported to be high and predominant for all classes of respondents, with the exception of male and rural Punjab. The figures for radio illustrate the variability of reach among different segments of the target population. In terms of the total respondent sample, radio was the next highest rating medium (19%). It attracted a lower rating however among girls (8%) than boys (21%); a lower rating among adolescents (12% for the 16-20 age group) than young adults (28% for the 21-35 age group); and a higher rating in rural areas in Punjab (34%) and Balochistan (46%). By contrast, Meena story books attracted higher ratings among girls (29%) than among boys (17%), those identified as illiterate (7%), or all respondents (19%).

The impact of low literacy levels (in the case of access to story books) and low income levels (in the case of direct household access to television) may be one of the major causes of lower access of the audience to Meena messages through the story books. The Nepal 2002 study, for example, revealed that less than 30% of the study population of 1,421 children had a television set at home. Despite such qualifications, the impact of television as a major means of communication cannot be ignored.

The studies also revealed the perceived impact on others exposed to Meena, as well as on the respondent. In the Indian study, of 187 child respondents across the three states who said that they knew of others who had been viewing/reading Meena materials, 102 (55%) reported noticing a change. The most commonly reported changes were using their newfound knowledge to teach children, a greater consciousness about cleanliness, and improved capabilities to deal with difficult situations. In the Bangladesh study, of 709 child respondents who said that they knew of others who had been been exposed to Meena, 595 (84%) reporting noticing a change. The most commonly reported changes were hand washing before and after meals, interest in extending their education, regular school attendance, washing hands after using latrine, and increased awareness of cleanliness.

The reported reaction by adults emphasize the potential impact of the story telling approach of the MCI. Over 90% of the focus group participants indicated that this approach was an effective way of educating and communicating with people. In the words of a community leader from Sindh:

“Constructive stories have been used traditionally to give children moral education in our area and it is a time tested way. “

Meena was perceived by the majority of respondents as their favourite character in the series, being rated as favourite by 86% of Bangladesh survey respondents and 25% in the Indian survey. If participants who did not nominate any character as their favourite are excluded from the Indian survey data, the number nominating Meena, as a percentage of respondents who identified particular characters, is 68%.

Respondents who indicated that they would like to be like Meena comprised 93% of respondents in the Indian study, 70% in the Pakistan study, and 25% in the Bangladesh study (which also featured a 62% non response rate). It was reported that 90% of participants in the Pakistan group discussions believed that children saw Meena as a role model.

These findings are significant in that they confirm the potential power of the main character in the series to influence audiences by virtue of being liked and being someone worth emulating. This is not sufficient to ensure the adoption of like behaviour but it does assist in providing a positive contribution to the range of factors that together are likely to promote behaviour change.

The most endearing features of Meena, in order of frequency, were identified in the Bangladesh study as intelligent, helpful and brave; in the India study as brave, intelligent and helpful; and in the Pakistan study as brave, kind and helpful. Discussions with stakeholders in India indicated that Meena’s self-confidence, courage and eagerness to learn were her most appreciated virtues. The majority of participants in discussion groups in Pakistan referred to Meena’s key qualities as helping others and being brave. As one mother commented:

“I want my children to be like Meena because I want them to be bold and self reliant and lead their lives according to their wishes and not depend on anyone. ”

The variations in implementation activities across and within the four countries, as outlined earlier, mean that in turn there has been considerable variation in the extent and nature of use of the materials available in the MCI. For conclusions and judgments on the use, nature of use, and usefulness of materials to be meaningful and helpful, they need to be made within particular activity and audience contexts. A specific example drawn from one of the country study reports is reported below to indicate the complexity of issues involved.

Majority of the participants in the focus group discussions in NWFP, Pakistan, were reported to have heard of or seen the Meena comic books. Both the children and teachers indicated that a set of four books and a poster were given to each child. The children further stated that no discussion was initiated by the teachers on issues raised in the books. A majority of the teachers confirmed this. **The children and mothers were unanimous in their view that the most effective way of using the comic books was to engage students in a discussion of them.** Community leaders and teachers however were of the view that there would only be time to discuss the books if they were formally included in the school curriculum. **Children and mothers saw this approach as changing a potentially enjoyable reading and discussion exercise into ‘the monotonous and boring routine of regular text books’.**

These examples indicate that the nature of use and usefulness of materials are influenced by more than their availability. These factors carry significant implications for teacher training, school curriculum development processes and education department advocacy activities, as part of strategic implementation planning for the MCI. The need for wide ranging, including cross-programme, strategic planning to realize the potential offered by the Meena materials have come out as one of the most crucial element for the sustainability of MCI’s educational contents.

A small minority of child respondents in each of the four country studies was able to identify programmes similar to that of Meena. In the Indian study, 3% of child respondents did so. In the Pakistan study, 5% could identify similar programmes, and in the Bangladesh study, the figure was 9% (181 children). The majority of children involved in the Nepal study discussions were reported as preferring the Meena episodes to other programmes because they were educational as well as entertaining.

The potential impact of the MCI is increased to the extent that those exposed to its messages discuss these with others. The evaluation provided some evidence of this occurring. Thus, in the Indian study, the data indicated that 17% of survey respondents reported having discussed Meena issues with others. The incidence was higher among girls (23%) than among boys (20%), and higher in Bihar (35% overall) and Uttar Pradesh (37% overall) than in Orissa (12% overall). The Pakistan

study indicates a similar overall discussion rate, with 20% reported as having discussed issues with others. A higher incidence was reported in the Bangladesh study, namely 48% overall, with the incidence being higher among girls (50%) than among boys (45%), and higher in urban areas (56%) than in rural areas (44%).

The people with whom the discussions occurred were reported in the Indian study as friends (72%), parents (21%), brother/sister (9%), neighbours (8%) and relatives (7%). The corresponding figures from the Bangladesh study were friends (83%), parents (10%), brother/sister (23%), neighbours (15%) and relatives (4%). The Pakistan study data pointed to friends and brothers and sisters as the most common partners in discussion.

Beyond the research and development stages, decisions on implementation have been largely decentralized to the country offices. This has involved the development of dissemination plans in each country, including planning of collaborative activities with NGO, government and private sector partners. The decentralization of much of the implementation planning has resulted in considerable variation in the nature, timing and extent of implementation of the MCI across Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal. Decisions on the particular steps to take

have varied, as each office has considered its priorities, local needs and contexts, and resources. This process has also been affected by the ways in which senior personnel have understood the nature of the MCI and its potential, and the extent to which they have championed its development and use.

The key elements of the scope and overall implementation approaches of the MCI were shaped in the initial development years when it was being coordinated through the UNICEF Bangladesh Office. Coordination and decision making at that time drew upon the views, experiences and expectations of key stakeholders, with BRAC and government representatives being involved in concept testing, discussion of emerging issues and ongoing resolution of problems. Decisions on the content focus of the materials were taken in the light of regional priorities identified by UNICEF within the overall MCI context of the needs of the girl child.

The direct participation of BRAC and government representatives in the decision making processes for the overall project in the initial years served not only to capitalise on local expertise and insights but also to build shared ownership with key external stakeholders. Paralleling this, internal UNICEF Section stakeholders were involved with the development of joint plans of action involving Meena.

This initial participatory decision making model has not always been fully reflected in the various country level implementation processes adopted after the initial development phases. By its nature, this model tends to be more time demanding and drawn out as the expectations and understandings of the various parties are explored and brought together as a basis for action. Its potential payoff is considerable however, in terms of shared understandings, shared commitment, provision of practical stakeholder support, and generation of goodwill. **These potential outcomes signal it as a key component to incorporate in future implementation models and processes adopted for the MCI.**

While there has been a mixture of strategies and timelines across the region, the history of the MCI, reveals a very extensive process of research, development and implementation in the region. Much has been done and much has been achieved with the resources available. The history of the initiative

also points to the value of moving to a more proactive and strategically planned set of processes. While there were some clearly laid out steps in the initial years, **the innovative nature of the MCI meant that there was a limited stock of corporate knowledge and experience on which to base long-term planning.**

The MCI has reached a stage of maturity by now however, enabling decision-making to be grounded in the experiences, lessons and insights gained over the last 12 years. Clear guidelines on implementation procedures, similar to those that have been established for research and development of the Meena materials, can be established, accompanied by specific targets, timelines and points of responsibility and accountability within a strategic planning framework.

Capacity building has been a continuing feature of the MCI from its inception. The areas covered have included knowledge and skills in field research, materials production and programme implementation. Capacity building has also occurred through the training of field

workers across the region in relation to the issues addressed by the MCI and procedures for facilitating discussion of these issues using Meena as an entry point.

Planning accordingly needs to include not only strategies for maintaining and extending current capacities, but also strategies for developing and/or outsourcing capacities that currently are in limited supply within the implementation agencies.

Discussions with stakeholders during the course of the evaluation, along with details derived from review of documentation on the project, indicate that the dedicated commitment of key players in the UNICEF regional and country Offices, and in a number of partner organizations, has played a critical role in facilitating the implementation of the MCI.

Implementation has also been facilitated by the inherent appeal of the product. The Meena materials have generally been very well received across a number of quite different contexts in the region, and beyond. This is in no small part **due to the rigorous and systematic research and development processes undertaken as integral components of the initiative.**

A number of factors serving to constrain implementation of the MCI were identified in the course of the evaluation. Gaps in UNICEF internal organizational awareness of Meena, implying a need for an extension of internal marketing. Instances were cited of some people in the organization having very little, if any, knowledge of the MCI and of its potential impact. This was instanced as occurring at both individual office and within country levels.

Related to this was the view that the effectiveness of implementation could be extended with greater integration of the Meena messages and materials across UNICEF programmes. In the words of a UNICEF official:

Shortage of funds: the substantial contributions by external donors from 1992 to 2003 were a major enabling factor for the MCI, especially in relation to the research and production aspects, but also for much of its implementation. Limits on availability of Meena materials, non-availability of materials in some local languages, limited physical infrastructure in some rural areas, local security problems, etc., constrained the implementation processes from time to time.

The focus on mass dissemination and long term sustainability in Phase Three of the initiative has led to a series of negotiations with existing and potential partners. These have centred on extending access of target audiences to Meena materials and activities. Some progress has been made in this regard. Thus, for example, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Turner Cartoon Network to enable the Meena film series to be shown across Asia. A three year contract has been signed with the Macmillan publishing company to print, market and distribute Meena materials in India. A partnership with the Asian Cricket Corporation is being negotiated to promote girls' education through the *Fair Play for Girls* campaign.

There is scope for further expansion of the MCI. The findings of the evaluation indicate that the MCI is having a positive impact where and when it is implemented. The evaluation findings also endorse the critical role of NGO, government, community and private sector partners in enabling the effective development and implementation of the MCI. The overall conclusion of the evaluation is as follows:

The findings in the evaluation confirm the potential of the MCI to communicate children's rights, particularly girls' rights, to South Asian audiences, and in so doing, to create awareness, promote acquisition of life skills, and encourage change in life skills practices. Achievements in each of these dimensions have been demonstrated. The extent to which the potential in each of these dimensions is realized has been seen however to depend on a range of implementation, audience and contextual factors. Each of these needs to be recognized and addressed for the MCI to achieve its intentions in any given situation. The evaluation findings have also indicated that the potential of the MCI, and its effects, will be heightened to the extent that it is integrated into related programmes undertaken by UNICEF, governments and NGOs, with the Meena materials and activities being seen as a tool in these programmes rather than as a separate programme per se. Evaluation of the Meena Communication Initiative, A synthesis of country level evaluations conducted in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan-Dr Paul Chesterton, Australian Catholic University, April, 2004

2.3.3 Some key recommendations made in the evaluation

- That a process of proactive design evaluation be undertaken for future MCI interventions to enable a clear identification and analysis of audience needs and an assessment of possible intervention overlaps, disjunctions and complementarities.
- That decisions on the means of communication for MCI interventions be based on sound research on the specific target audiences in each location in terms of the nature and extent of their access to communication resources, their capacity to use such resources, and their levels of receptivity to those that can be accessed.
- That the target audiences for any specific set of messages be clearly identified and a continuing set of consistent messages be conveyed over time to those audiences.
- That implementation planning for the MCI be of a multidimensional strategic nature that addresses infrastructural and cultural elements as well as those related directly to communication.
- That increased attention be given to cross-programme planning for implementation of the MCI.
- That internal marketing of the MCI be extended so that personnel across the range of programmes are aware of and can assess the potential of the MCI in relation to the programmes in which they are involved.
- That efforts be continued and intensified with government departments and NGOs to heighten awareness of how Meena materials and messages can be used as an integral tool within their own programmes.
- That in tailoring MCI interventions for specific groups, due attention be given to the factors underlying their specific needs as well as to the needs per se.
- That ongoing evaluation be built into MCI implementation, to enable closer monitoring of outcomes and refinement of processes during implementation where warranted.

- That evaluation processes, both during and after MCI implementation, be preceded and informed by a clear articulation of intended awareness and practice outcomes for the target audience, determined in the light of the needs analysis approach as proposed in Recommendation.
- That attention be given in planning MCI interventions to the adoption of complementary strategies that address factors underlying non-adoption of changes intended by the MCI.
- That a program logic approach be considered as a means of assessing the likely impact of intended specific interventions.
- That the appeal of the Meena series to its intended audiences be subject to ongoing monitoring.
- That strategies to promote discussion of Meena messages by those exposed to them be extended, and that such strategies be considered as a normal and integral part of any MCI implementation package.
- That the use of a participatory decision making model be extended in country level implementation processes for the MCI.
- That guidelines on implementation procedures, similar to those that have been established for research and development of the Meena materials, be established, accompanied by specific targets, timelines, and points of responsibility and accountability within a strategic planning framework.
- That the range of skills required for the effective and efficient ongoing development and implementation of the MCI be identified.
- That in conjunction with Recommendation 17, strategies be developed for maintaining and extending current capacities and for developing and/or outsourcing capacities that are in limited supply within the implementation agencies.
- That increased attention be given to multiplication and replication opportunities within the MCI, subject to close assessment of the degree of fit with newly intended audiences' needs and contexts.
- That steps be taken to extend the dissemination of details of specific interventions, their contexts and their effects, across the region so that each country office and the implementing agencies within each country are aware of the range of options available.
- That the UNICEF offices identify, affirm, support and provide development opportunities for key internal personnel committed to the MCI with a view to their leading future MCI operations, or elements of these, to the extent that such operations are retained within the organization.
- That the research and development process used for MCI materials production be maintained.

- That clear guidelines be developed for the reporting of cost details of the MCI, on an annual basis, at both country and regional levels.
- That suggestions made by participants in the evaluation as to alternative ways in which Meena could be used for promoting the rights of children and women be considered as part of the proposed strategic planning for the MCI.
- That consideration be given to the adoption of the model outlined for the future operation of the MCI as elaborated in the evaluation report.

2.3.4. A number of other research studies have been undertaken as well in the past

- **National Media Survey** (1998) in Bangladesh: 44% urban and 17% rural adults recalled Meena from TV. 97% of these adults stated they liked Meena very much. Of Dhaka residents who watch TV, more than 50% knew the Meena character and identified the series as being about “girls’ rights”.
- **Baseline survey** for Meena component of IDEAL project (1999) in Bangladesh: of school-going children, 87% girls and 84% boys knew Meena. Identification with Meena’s character was strong. Of school-going children, 87% girls and 86% boys reported that they practice what Meena does. 77% parents saw Meena as a small village girl; only 10% perceiving her strictly as a cartoon character. Total sample size was 3, 787.
- **Case studies** (1999) in Nepal: to look into Meena’s impact, studying individual girls in their family and community context. Girls compared themselves with Meena and aspired to do what she does. Parents indicated how Meena had convinced them about the need to educate girls.
- **Impact study** (1997) in Pakistan: this small study concluded that after exposure to Meena materials there was an all-round shift in children towards being more “gender-fair,” as well as becoming more “expressive, imaginative, spontaneous and bold.” “Looking from a Child Rights’ perspective, Meena can be a strong tool for restoring childhood - in some significant ways – to a large segment of children, which has been robbed of it... It introduces change in attitudes of children towards child and gender related issues.”
- **Nepal evaluation (2003):** One of the objectives of the Nepal evaluation was to find out the behavioral changes brought by the Meena Project in various aspects of community life, particularly in the lives of the female children. A total of 1,421 children (675 girls and 746 boys), 880 parents and 44 school teachers were interviewed to generate information for this study. Nearly three quarters of the children were able to recall two main messages: **girls are to be given education** (71.2%) and **need for proper hand washing** (72.2%). Six in every ten children also recalled the message regarding **no discrimination between boys and girls**. All (1,421) children were asked whether they had encouraged their younger brothers and sisters to wash hands after defecation. Among children who are exposed to Meena, 85.8% said that they do compared to 79.5% of children who have not been exposed.

After watching the Meena series, 82% of the parents reported that they have changed their perception towards female children. 69% of the fathers and 57% of the mothers reported that they began to realize that girls are as capable and as good as boys. Similarly, 45% of fathers and 60% of mothers began to give equal quantity of food to girl and boy children (traditionally, boys get more food). 20% of parents reported that they have started sending their girls to school after watching Meena. However, 71% of the parents in the exposed group were already sending children to school.

- **Vietnam: assessment of Meena/Mai Communication Initiative pilot project (2003):** the objective of the study was to identify factors in the implementation of the MCI which contribute to or limit the achievements of the project goals so as to help UNICEF and its partners to improve future programme activities. The methodology used was in-depth-interviews, focus group discussions and analysis of secondary data. Use of Meena sensitized the community on Child Rights issues and raised awareness regarding discrimination. Findings showed that both children and mothers can relate to the Meena stories:

“If get(ting) married too early our health will be in bad condition, which will fatally affect our health afterward, we will not be able to give birth to children.”

3. OVERVIEW OF THE MCI 1991-2003

3.1 Background: Meena is born

1990s were declared the Decade of the Girl Child by the governments of South Asia (SAARC) in order to address discrimination against girls in the region and promote their potential to participate in development. In these countries, especially in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, female children face differential treatment in all aspects of their lives. Deep-rooted traditional beliefs and practices threaten the protection as well as survival of girls in many instances. The Meena Communication Initiative (MCI) was initiated as an innovative response to address these concerns and bring about a transformation in the situation of the female children in this region.

The concept of an animated film project on the girl child was first developed in March, 1990 at a UNICEF workshop on **Animated Film for Development** in Prague. Many works were reviewed, including Walt Disney's first attempt to teach communities about health and population issues in the 1950s; "Karate Kid" on the protection of street children against HIV/AIDS; and a Canadian film "Prescription for Health" on prevention of diarrhoeal diseases. James P. Grant, the former Executive Director of UNICEF, challenged William Hanna of Hanna-Barbara Productions who attended the meeting, and Neill McKee, former UNICEF Communication Officer based in Bangladesh, to come up with an animated film project. McKee had a dream that night of a young cartoon girl and so began Meena's journey. Hanna Barbara offered his company's support in a production to benefit children. An animated film series was proposed for the South Asian region to highlight the situation of female children and to educate on the need for promoting her status, survival, development and protection. Meena was identified as an appropriate name for a regional heroine. The aim of the film series was to provide education through entertainment. It was also suggested that multi-media communication materials and products could be used to popularise the concept.

3.2 Phase One: 1991-1992

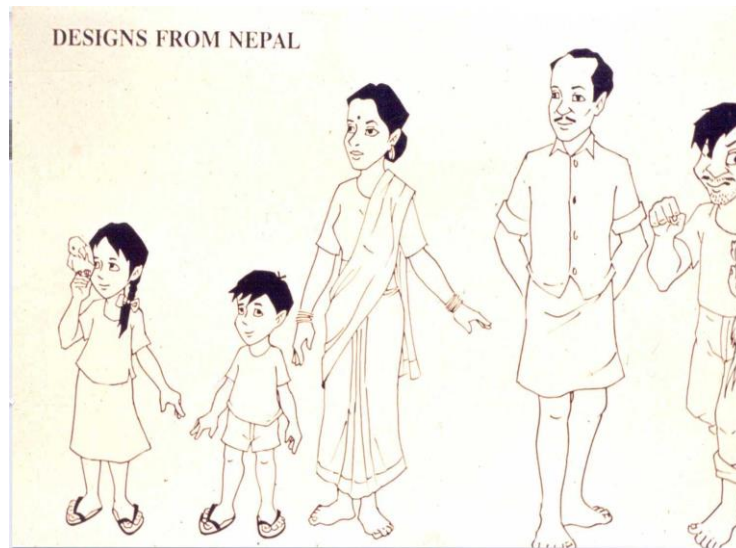
Development of Pilot Film Episode and support materials

In this phase some educational/support and promotional materials were produced to test the validity of the concept and the feasibility of creating a regional communication package. The Pilot phase ran from May 1991 to December 1992. During this phase the strategies for collaboration on the research, design, development and production of the film and materials were evolved and modified. The development of the pilot phase was a unique challenge. The process involved UNICEF communication officers, artists and animators, gender experts, educators/academics, media talents, dramatists and puppeteers and many creative talents. To set up the pilot phase the main tasks were : locating South Asian professionals for the development team; literature review on the girl child's status; defining the concepts related to the girl child; researching traditional and contemporary literature and art in South Asia for inspiration on plot, characterization, and visual design; reviewing different forms and styles of animation used for entertainment and education; developing an initial story line; developing the characters' personalities and roles; designing the characters' appearance to be

acceptable across the region; creating “regional” background designs; and so on , through the complete research, design and production processes. These conceptual and design decisions were endorsed by the findings of the pilot testing.

The context and treatment of the girl child issue in the film was based on extensive research conducted in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan- the initial four participating countries. Artists in each country were commissioned to produce drawings of Meena and her family and the village, which were then combined to create the regional characters and background designs.

Samples of initial drawings by the artists from four countries:



Nepal



Bangladesh



Pakistan



India

In the first step of the Pilot phase a draft script was developed by Rachel Carnegie, the key author of the series and modified in consultation with the regional team. The story board and designs were pre-tested and the first regional workshop was organized in January, 1992 by Morten Geirsing-the Regional Communication Officer at the time in UNICEF Regional Office in Kathmandu to review the results of the pre-testing and to finalize the designs and script. The pre-production package was finalized by Ram Mohan, one of the best animators in the world. The animation was then produced at Fil-Cartoons, the Hannah Barbara studios in Manila under Mohan's creative direction. The film was produced in English and four South Asian languages. The support materials, including a comic book, poster and facilitators' guide were also produced in five languages. The pilot materials were then field tested in four countries.

Field testing of the Pilot Materials for acceptance by communities

Extensive research on the film and support materials was undertaken in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, involving 2600 respondents. The research established Meena as a highly credible and acceptable vehicle for imparting development messages to create awareness regarding discrimination against girls in this region. As an example of "enter-educate" communication, the Meena animated film series illustrates how a creative and exciting story line can be used to promote social issues in an appealing and amusing way:

*“Animation in this film is an acceptable and effective format for conveying educational messages to low income people in South Asia. Actually, the audiences’ perception of the film in no way gets affected by the unreal characters that animation portrays. For viewers this was a film with a message and with a distinction which sets it apart from the other, largely commercial films they have seen. It appears to talk to them directly about their lives, not about the lives of movie stars. A majority asked for the film to be replayed. If the audiences are asked certain questions, the film engenders a lively debate about the value of girls’ education. This suggests that the film and comic books can be most effectively used in educational and motivational settings. **It appears that Meena’s potential is unlimited and should be exploited**”- pilot research, Episode one video, 1992.*

3.3 Phase Two - 1993-1997: development of the film series (12 Episodes and co-production of two radio series with BBC World Service)

Steps in the development and production process

During Phase two, the project team evolved a process for the development of the film series. The consultants working on the regional project were: Rachel Carnegie- script writer and creative director; Dr Mira Aghi- research director; Ram Mohan- animation director; Nuzhat Shahzadi- co- writer of scripts (and implementation coordinator for Bangladesh). The steps followed for the development of each episode includes:

Research and development of concept:

- i) Definition of concept by UNICEF Meena team.
- ii) Checking of concepts and technical inputs by content experts.
- iii) Verification and clarification of concepts and their acceptance through research.

Research and development of draft story line:

- iv) Creation of draft story line by scriptwriter (often based on stories brainstormed at regional workshops).
- v) Feedback from UNICEF country offices including counterparts, regional advisers and technical experts from New York HQ.
- vi) Revision of story lines.
- vii) Pre-testing of story lines in four countries, involving national research agencies coordinated by research director.
- viii) Consultation between research director, creative director/s and scriptwriter/s on revision of story line.
- ix) Further cycles of research and re-drafting, until all aspects of story line are considered effective.
- x) Second review by UNICEF South Asian Offices and technical advisers.

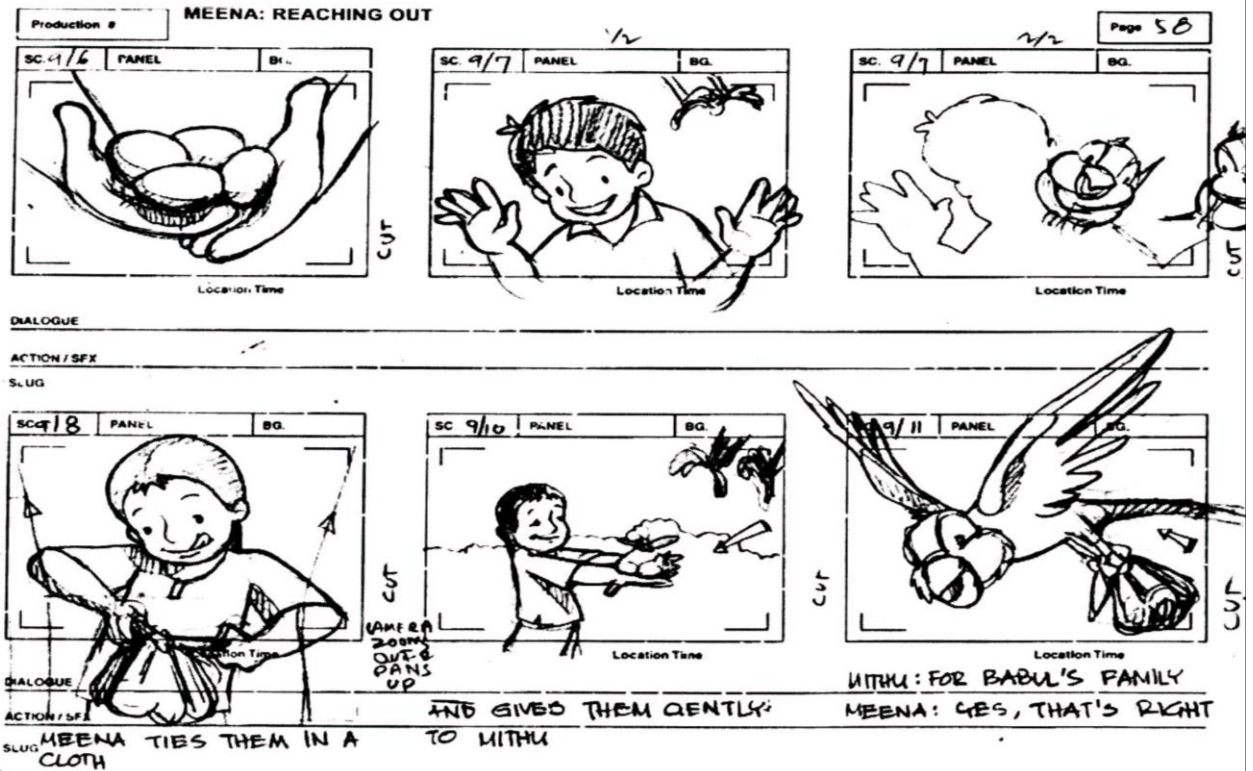
Final pre-testing with animatic video:

- xi) Story produced as animatic (storyboard) video in Hindi by Ram Mohan.
- xii) Narration for animatic video in other languages dubbed on to U-matic in Dhaka, Kathmandu and Islamabad.
- xiii) Pre-test of animatic video and designs for new characters in four countries.

- xiv) Review of pre-testing results and synthesizing of the same by regional Meena team at workshop.

Pre-production Materials:

- xv) Final script prepared jointly by scriptwriter/s, researcher and animation director. Script translated into Hindi and then back into English to ensure that the patterns of speech and the length of sentences can be successfully translated and dubbed into South Asian languages.
- xvi) Final check of script by technical adviser.
- xvii) Creative meeting on storyboard between scriptwriter and animators to flesh out details (visual play/humour, cultural contexts, representation of technical issues, gestures, etc.).
- xviii) Pre- production materials- story board, background keys, character models, lay out keys, voice track with dialogue and songs –prepared by Ram Mohan, in consultation with script writer/creative director.



Example of a storyboard from an upcoming episode –12 illustrations per second are used in Meena

Animation Production

- xix) If using Fil- Cartoons' studios, pre-production package taken by Ram Mohan and/or Rachel Carnegie to brief F-C animators. In the later years Nuzhat Shahzadi has been doing these activities with Ram Mohan's team.
- xx) After production, creative team and Meena coordinator checks through rough cuts and calls for retakes.
- xxi) In case of F-C productions final 35 mm prints (master negative, dupe negative and work print positive) sent to Bombay for post production.
- xxii) If production done at Ram Mohan's studios, exposed film could be sent to Manila for processing owing to poor processing quality in Bombay (1991-1994). In the later years with the use of animo and other soft wares it was possible to undertake these activities in Ram Mohan's studios.

Post-production

- xxiii) Post production process is managed by Ram Mohan's studios in consultation with creative director/Meena coordinator.
- xxiv) Music, sound effects and final mix completed under Ram Mohan's/Meena coordinator's supervision.
- xxv) A UNICEF officer from each country officer goes to Bombay to supervise dubbing of own language version (preferably in sets of 3-4 episodes). These days, some countries have provisions to do this activity locally.
- xxvi) Country offices provide titles for episode (language versions).
- xxvii) Film completed with: titles in English, Hindi Bangla, Nepali and Urdu; credits in English; common opening sequence; and copyright sign with date. Now, UNICEF branding is used (2003).
- xxviii) Final film provided in U-matic (till 1995), (Digi) Betacam (at present), 35 mm or 16 mm (till 1995) prints as required by each UNICEF office. Ram Mohan coordinates ordering of film prints.
- xxix) Masters/sub-Masters need to be stored under certain environmental conditions otherwise they will get corrupt/spoiled. Cells should be stored likewise.

3.4 Support Materials

Designing a poster

- a. Concept and message defined by regional team.
- b. Three/four sketch designs prepared by Ram Mohan, drawing on visual imagery of film episode.
- c. Sketch designs and messages reviewed by UNICEF offices and technical advisers.
- d. Sketch designs and message pre-tested, revised and again pre-tested.
- e. Final, full colour poster produced by Ram Mohan.

Designing story book

- a. Draft story developed based on Ram Mohan's illustrations for the animatic video (till 1995). Now, stories are adapted from the animation script.
- b. Revisions and new illustrations prepared by Ram Mohan as required.

- c. Text is adapted /translated by a literacy education specialist. Language should be graded for a specific reading level (e.g. a child in class 3) to promote use of Meena books in primary schools and adult literacy programmes.
- d. Draft story book reviewed by UNICEF offices and technical advisers.
- e. Draft storybook pre-tested, revised and again pre-tested. With experience the concerned person can do it with quick and dirty approach.
- f. Text and illustrations finalized prior to printing.

Printing support materials

- a. When each country office requires a relatively small print run, it is economical to print centrally in five colours, i.e. full colour illustrations, with different language texts overprinted on 5th plate. With growing demand of Meena the country offices are now doing it individually based on their programme needs. The English regional version is still being printed under the supervision/creative guidance of the Regional Coordinator from ROSA-Kathmandu (2001-April 2004).

3.5 “Rules” of writing Meena scripts

Writing scripts for the Meena series is not an easy task. The concentration/focus needs to be on: UNICEF’s messages (on Girls or Goals or both); the need for a good story that intrigues and excites the audience but is also relevant, appealing and credible; balanced blending of entertainment and educational elements (90% entertainment and 10% education); portrayal of life skills (communication and negotiating skills, psychological autonomy, ability to contribute to family, empathy, etc.) mainly by Meena without being insensitive to the culture.

Some key learning points

1. Maximize action and minimize dialogue. When the dialogue gets heavy, it becomes too “messagy.”
2. Limit the script to one main theme, with at most 2-3 sub-messages related to this theme. This will require thoughtful negotiations, since the UNICEF programme sectors would like to get all their messages in. Use the entertainment-education formula to assess the script.
3. Consider whether the script would be better as live action drama or as animation. Don’t waste money on using animation when it is not necessary.
4. Research in South Asia has recommended making “realistic” animation. i.e. Don’t animate the inanimate (dancing brooms and bottles, etc.). But make the most of the potential of animation by pushing the realism to the limits to include as much comedy and visual humour as possible. A level/degree of fantasy is vital to the appeal of animation. The challenge lies in finding the right balance between fantasy and reality to ensure that the film is still a credible source of ideas. Continuous experimentation is crucial to keep expanding the boundries of what is acceptable.

This issue is illustrated by Mithu. In reality, a parrot does not act exactly like Mithu, but research has shown that it is credible in animation.

5. Mithu is an important character. Consider his role and symbolism. Is it a) to provide comedy; b) to participate in the action and help to solve Meena’s “problem” c) to act as a confidante, so that Meena can articulate her feelings; d) to highlight Meena’s plight

- through its reactions to other characters and events; e) to act as the girl’s alter ego, challenging traditional norms and discrimination when she is constrained by her culture (e.g. questioning elders). Mithu can take on any or all of the above.
6. Present a positive image of the girl child- as an achiever, not as a victim. However, this does not exclude her from being depressed/sad at times. The audience will identify, more strongly with the girl if she displays a full range of emotions.
 7. Maximise on the potential in animation for comedy and drama. Emotions can be intensified by the use of animals, nature and the elements to echo Meena’s experiences. Comic “gags” and visual display (e.g. frogs hopping 2X2 in “Count Your Chicken” episode) give great entertainment.
 8. Create links between scenes to steer the audience through the story and anticipate later events. For example in “Count your Chickens” the headman warns about the thief, who is hiding in the tree. In “Meena’s Three Wishes,” Meena says that things like magic carpets exist in dreams. This helps the audience to understand the next scene when Meena goes on to dream about a magic carpet flight.
 9. Maintain suspense in the action to carry the audience to the end of the story.
 10. Use dramatic irony to create tension and comedy. This is used, for example, in “Too Young to Marry” with the confusion in the identity of Rita’s proposed fiance.
 11. Most important of all- avoid letting the series follow a fixed formula. Meena is not a Soap Opera. Try to keep the film’s plots and treatment spontaneous and continuously surprising, so that the audiences are stimulated and challenged.



Examples of draft story concepts being developed in participatory workshop settings by writers/programmers/researchers/artists/academics...

3.6 Formative Research in the Meena series

In the formative phase, intensive research was carried out in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal to develop a regional character who should be the symbol of South Asian girls. At present, other countries have adapted the Meena materials and found them effective in addressing the problems of girls. These countries are: Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.

In a nutshell, formative research is used to design and produce a particular material or communication strategy aiming to bring about behavioural change. Formative research refers to all the investigations pursued before a final product is produced. The aim of this research is to make the product (book film, poster, TV programme, etc.) as relevant and responsive as possible to the audience.

Before initiating the research for the Meena series, the underlying assumptions were clarified. The objective of the Meena series is to high light the problems faced by girls in South Asia. These issues are to be raised, discussed and dealt with in such a manner that the society at large recognizes them and understands that they hinder the development of girls. These problems need to be solved in order to assist young girls to realise their full potential. Just as the problems have to be recognized by the girl, her family and community, so the solutions have to be acceptable to them as well.

These solutions have to fit into the lives of people. They need to feel that these are their solutions. In the Meena Initiative communities have been made partners in the creative process right from the beginning. People’s perceptions, suggestions and anecdotes are used to evolve a story line, which is discussed and modified repeatedly, until people are satisfied with the portrayal of the problem and the solution suggested.

Animation clearly offers an opportunity to address sensitive issues through an entertaining film, but in-depth research was necessary to ascertain its credibility and effectiveness as a medium for communicating controversial and sensitive issues related to gender disparity in an open but unthreatening way. Research was therefore needed to define to define these parameters with people of such diverse socio-cultural background.

Formative research has also been used to ascertain that each episode of the Meena series maintains the delicate balance between “education” and “entertainment” – between serious social issues and entertaining stories that appeal to both children and adults. Particular care was taken to prevent the episodes becoming overloaded with messages.

The formative research engages people with the story and thereby conveys the ideas through the process of identification with the characters and events. It examines people’s understanding of each issue or message, the appropriateness of the story line and characters and the acceptability of the solution/s offered in the stories.

Research Plan

a. Research on concepts

Based on UNICEF’s priorities an issue is identified in a regional workshop setting participated by UNICEF-Meena focal points, researchers, programmers, etc. This could be enrollment/retention of girls in school. The researcher’s task is then to validate this concept with people, to establish whether they really do consider this a problem. By introducing the topic to the people in focus group discussions (FGD) the researcher probes peoples’ understanding of the issue, along with their existing attitudes, beliefs and values. In FGDs people bring out different dimensions of the problems and are also stimulated to suggest solutions.

b. Research on draft story lines

The findings from the concept research are used to develop the initial drafts of the story lines. These are reviewed by technical experts within and outside of UNICEF. These storylines which blend educational and social concepts with humour, adventure and personal appeal are taken back to the people to establish the entertainment value, comprehension and credibility of the storyline. The respondents are engaged to participate in the construction of the story by suggesting changes. In this way they become equal partners in the development process of the Meena stories. With feedback from the research, the stories are modified by scriptwriters and then returned once again for further field testing. The more the sensitive issue-more pretesting is needed. The process of refinement of stories continue until the respondents, researchers, scriptwriter/s, technical experts are satisfied with the story.

c. Research on storyboard animatic videos

The storyline is then produced as a series of still colour images from the storyboard filmed on video with a single narrator. This is recorded in four languages (Bangla, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu). The respondent get another chance to validate in this process. At this stage, they can also respond to the visual representation of the characters and events. Only when the feedback from all the participating countries has been synthesized and consensus reached on all aspects of the story, it is taken forward for production.

Episode one was tested in four countries for acceptance after it was produced.

Formative research process

The research design is prepared to conduct simultaneous research in all participating countries. The research tools are designed to address each stage in the development of the story. The sites for research in different parts of all the participating countries are mapped and usually those sites are selected where the issues addressed in the stories are more prevalent. The MCI series is intended for the general public, so the research is conducted with a wide range of soci-economic groups. Rural and urban sites are always chosen to capture all possible diversities.

The schedules and guides for data collection include

- i. Structured questionnaire to collect general information.
- ii. An observation schedule to study the attention and reactions of the group through non-verbal expressions, while watching the animatic video or listening to the storyline.
- iii. A semi- structured questionnaire for group discussions to understand their attitudes and beliefs.
- iv. A semi-structured questionnaire for focus group interviews to get the audience's response to various aspects of the story.

Questions are open ended to elicit spontaneous responses. Probing is used when needed. Research is undertaken in the following areas:

- a. Comprehension
- b. Credibility/realism

- c. Cultural sensitivity
- d. Acceptability
- e. Educational value
- f. Entertainment and appeal

The research team

Dr Mira Aghi, a former Sesame Street veteran has designed the research of the MCI. Research teams have been trained in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Laos and Vietnam by both Dr. Aghi and Nuzhat Shahzadi, the MCI UNICEF Coordinator.

The research has shown animation in the Meena films as a powerful and appealing medium for communicating issues and ideas. It teaches while it fascinates and delights. Due to the strong research process, sensitive gender issues have been addressed in an open and non-confrontational manner. Interest, fun and educational messages have been fully balanced making the series almost universally applicable.

3.7 Summary of key research findings: an example

"COUNT YOUR CHICKENS"

Issue: Girls' right to education

THE FINAL STORY

Meena longs to go to school like her younger brother, but her parents believe that education is of little value to girls. So, instead, Meena sends her pet parrot, Mithu, off to school to learn. On his return, the parrot teaches Meena how to multiply. When Meena is practising this, she immediately notices that one of her chickens is missing, and so she is in time to catch the thief. With support from the local community, Meena's resourcefulness convinces her parents that she too should go to school.



Meena wishfully peeping into the class room ...

RESEARCH ON THE STORYBOARD:

"Count Your Chickens" was the pilot episode for the series. The pre-testing for the film was conducted during December 1991 and January 1992. This was before Dr Mira Aghi joined the project. National research teams carried out the pre-testing with focus groups in all four countries, although it was not as extensive in scope as with later episodes. The script was tested as a synopsis of the story line, accompanied by 10 still colour images. The aim was to test the visual representation of the characters and setting, as well as the treatment of the themes and plot. The most significant findings from the region as a whole were as follows:

Visuals:

- Meena's dress and character was acceptable across the region.
- Meena's skin was too pale. Although respondents often admired this, it carried problematic cultural implications. Light skinned girls are considered to be more beautiful in the sub-continent and hence they have more value in the “marriage market.”
- The names of Meena's parrot and brother (formerly Pipu and Apu) were not acceptable across the region and were changed to Mithu and Raju.
- Meena's mother should not appear too oppressed. She should show some of Meena's spirit.
- The mother's and teacher's saree was not acceptable in Pakistan. A large shawl could be used to 'disguise' the dress. If the lower legs are not shown, the adult women could therefore be assumed to be wearing with a saree or a shalwar kameez (long shirt and trousers). It was acceptable for the other village women to wear a range of styles.
- The thief appeared too thin and poor. There was even some sympathy expressed for him, as he was considered to be so desperate that he needed to steal the chicken to feed his family.
- The headman, conversely, appeared too fat and prosperous. One group in Bangladesh claimed that "he must be corrupt and probably stole public wheat".
- The background design was acceptable and recognisable across the region.

Plot and themes:

- The plot was understood by most and the theme was seen as relating to girls' education.
- Adults agreed with the stated advantages of sending girls to school.
- The thief chase was appreciated for its humour and realism in village life. (There had been a suggestion from some media professionals that the chase scene was a "Hollywood" device and not appropriate to South Asia.)
- The thief was removed from the final scene to avoid detracting from the focus on Meena and her schooling.
- A final scene was required to prove that Meena actually went to school the following day.

Phase Two (Jan 1993-June 1995)

In the second phase, 12 more packages were produced including the two radio series; partnerships were built for implementation of the project at all levels throughout the region, and explorations were made to institutionalize Meena outside of UNICEF for future sustainability.

The acceptance and utilization of the pilot video and other support materials during this period has indicated the potential scope of the MCI. UNICEF partners in the government, NGOs and private sectors have become active partners in dissemination, using materials for social mobilization on the girl child issues, as well as for gender training and basic education.

With a view to long term sustainability of the MCI a global plan for the business development of the initiative was also commissioned. This gives guidelines on the marketing and distribution of the Meena materials, as well as issues related to copyright, trademarks, merchandizing, licensing, syndication, both within the region and worldwide. Worldwide copyright for Meena materials has been registered in the United States.

UNICEF Bangladesh has conducted development and sales of prototype commercial Meena products, with encouraging results. It was clear that MCI materials have a potential market among the middle class in India and Pakistan as well.

A high level Task Force for Meena was established in NYHQ and the Regional Meena Coordinator ((L-4) was hired, based in ROSA (1995).

Phase Three (July 1998-2003)

The MCI is a three phase-project with a vision of a fourth phase which will witness the achievement of long-term sustainability by firmly integrating the MCI in country programmes and institutionalizing Meena at the national level with support from UNICEF country offices and partners.

In the third phase, implementation is continuing, more episodes are being produced on regional and country specific priorities, commercial publishing has begun (Bangladesh and India), partnership with media is being forged (MOU with Turner being finalized), advocates (partnership with Asian Cricket Corporation-ACC) are brought on board to promote acceleration of girls' education through the MCI and the concept of sustainability is enhanced. Also, envisaged is the further expansion of commercial publishing in other participating countries, the creation of stronger partnerships with international media companies and broadcast networks, and the development/exploration of other self-sustaining mechanisms. In addition, evaluation is being undertaken to measure the effectiveness of the project in four major implementing countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan). One documentation study on implementation of the project has been undertaken in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos PDR. National assessments have also been undertaken in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam.

The fourth phase (2004 - onward)

In this phase more emphasis will be given on country ownerships and sustainability through integration of the MCI into the country programmes. Capacity building for effective implementation, reproductions/adaptations, language versioning and inter-agency collaboration will continue. Plans are on board to host an interactive website, a regional launch of Meena educational packages to ensure political commitment of the South Asian governments for promotion of girls' education. Brainstorming is on going to strategize on way forward.

3.6 Implementation and Strategies

“As a result of the dissemination of the Meena programme through different channels, including the itinerant cinema and non-formal primary education programmes, children of many of Bangladesh poorest communities are able to easily identify the Meena character, and some with whom we spoke said they had seen Meena on television. Several children were able to narrate to us in detail the episodes they had seen. Comic books and posters regarding to the Meena programme are being produced and distributed. The size of the target audience for these materials is staggering..... Because of Meena’s high degree of acceptance, public and private institutions of all sizes and fields of action have expressed their interest in employing Meena’s sweet image to disseminate their own proposals and messages....We can therefore safely assume that the programme’s potential impact will continue to grow geometrically.” (The Meena Communication Initiative: Looking toward the future, May 1995- Manual Manrique Castro, UNICEF-ROSA Consultant).

The implementation/ dissemination strategy involves a communication model consisting of three elements (to be revised periodically based on the learning experiences.):

Advocacy

Creating and sustaining political and social commitment amongst policy makers and decision-makers to support realization of the CRC, with special focus on the female children/adolescents. Some examples are:

- advocating with heads of states, ministers, parliamentarians to influence laws that have negative effects on female children's development; promote and enhance those policies that encourage girls' participation and empowerment.
- Integrating Meena into advocacy events (SAARC Meena Day, Girl Child Week, World AIDS Day, International Women's Day, etc.)

Social Mobilization/Building Partnerships

Building alliances and creating partnerships for Social development approaches addressing the needs of children, with a special focus on female children. Some examples are:

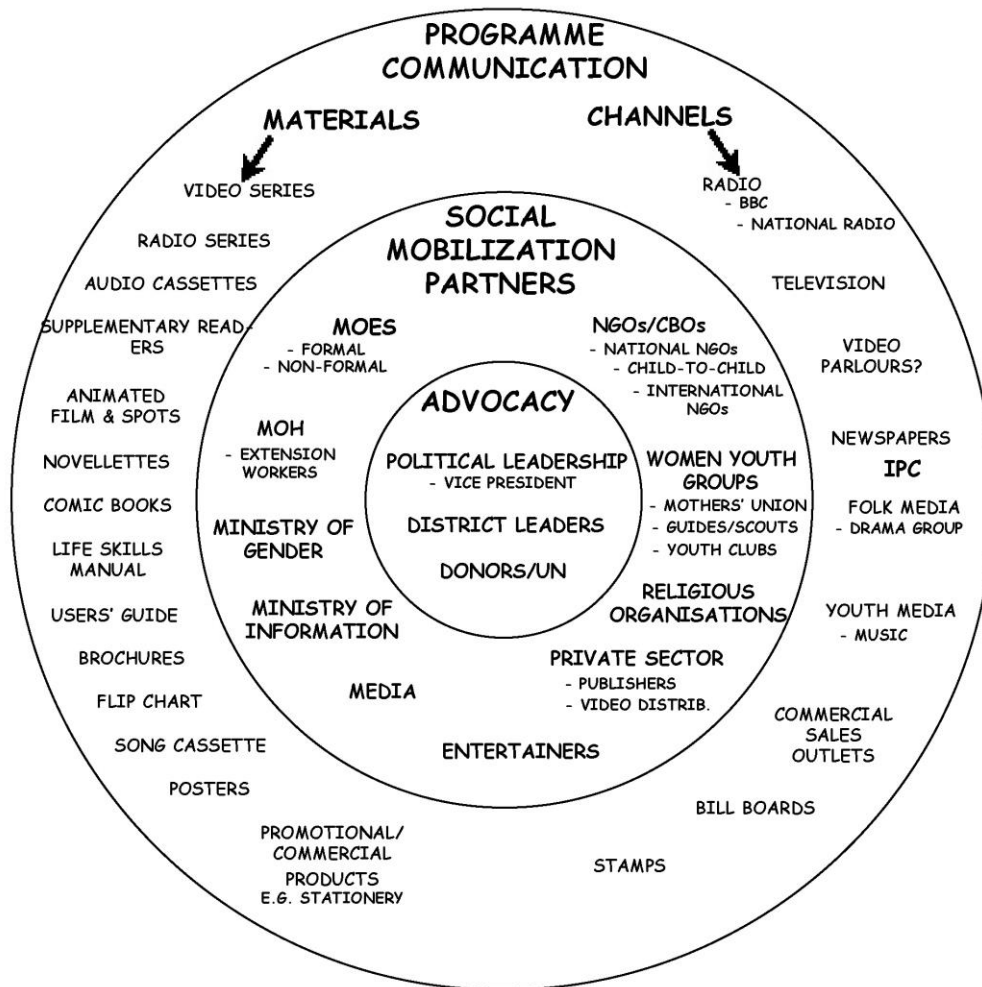
- develop and implement collaborative dissemination plans with implementing partners in government, NGOs and the media.
- network with partners and build their capacities through training and programme development support.

Programme Communications

Developing and exploiting the full potential of communication materials, channels of dissemination and activities used at the grass-roots level to bring about attitudinal change and behavioral development among children as well as in adults. Some examples are:

- develop need-based materials with community participation through an intensive formative research process. facilitate a continuing process of participation of all levels of target groups for attitudinal change and behavioural development issues.

MEENA COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



4. MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

The end of the funding grant from the Government of Norway brings to an end the unit in the UNICEF Regional Office that handles Meena and developed new products for country office use. The future of the project now lies with UNICEF and partners in countries using the MCI as appropriate to further their programme aims.

The unit consisted of a Regional Meena Adviser (Communication Officer, L-4) supported by a one staff member (Project Assistant-GS level 6). Both posts were in the ROSA Communication section and reported to the P-5 Regional Communication Adviser. The Meena Adviser acted as the custodian of the brand on behalf of UNICEF, while devising and developing new products. For country offices using the MCI the adviser gave technical support and assistance with training.

Meena has proved to be extremely popular and UNICEF has 30 fully developed stories. It is a significant investment by donors and a valuable brand. The ROSA Communication Section will continue to look for ways to take MCI forward.

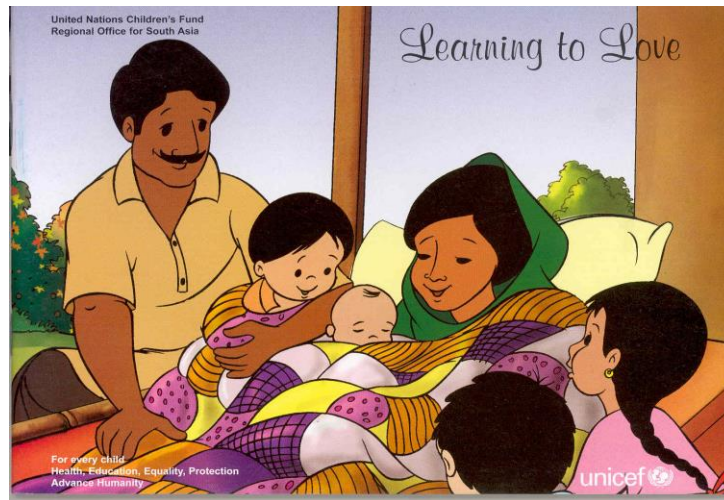
5. FINANCIAL UTILIZATION REPORT

Please see attached Pdf file

Appendix 1

Outlines of some regional stories are given below:

Learning Through Love (ECD)



Main Messages:

- Every child needs love and care
- Father's role in parenting is crucial
- Stimulation is key to learning and brain development of the child

Life Skills:

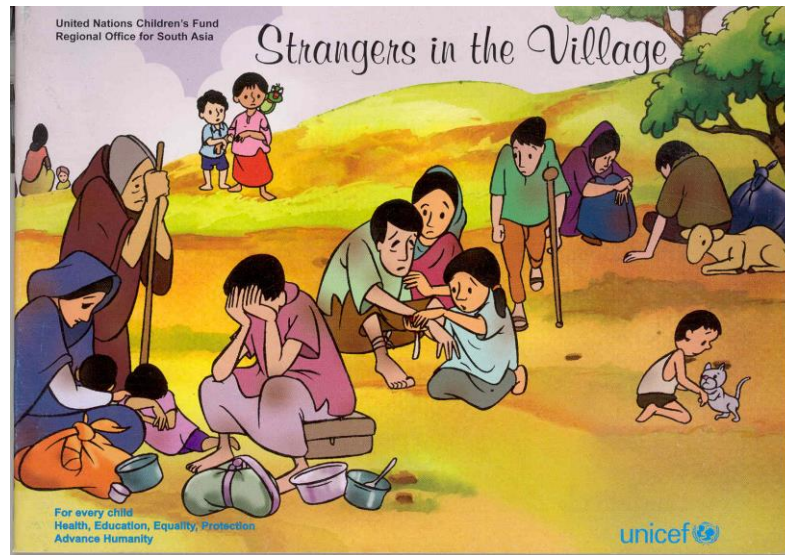
- Self awareness
- Communication skills

Critical thinking, decision making and problem solving

Meena's aunt is pregnant and comes to stay at their house for delivery. She brings her 4 year old son, Lala, who shies off clutching his toy and doesn't want to talk or play with anyone. By seeing Meena's family, Aunt realises that Lala didn't have enough stimulation during his earlier years. This has made him withdrawn. Meena's father regularly plays with his children and this makes uncle wonder about

his role as Lala's father. He now understands the need to give time to Lala. Meena and her family try to do their best to involve Lala in all their games. Lala still doesn't participate but watches Meena and the others with interest, hiding behind his mother. Finally, after aunt gives birth to the new baby, everyone is busy with her. When no one was looking, Meena's little sister, Rani, crawls with her doll and is about to fall off the veranda. Lala lets go off his toy for the first time, rushes forward and catches her- at the same time falling on the ground. As he falls with Rani, he calls her name, "Rani." Lala finally comes around as a result of Meena and her family's friendliness.

**Strangers in the village
(Children in armed conflict situation)**



Main Messages:

- High risk everywhere of low intensity conflict
- Dialogue is key to understanding; reveals commonalities and clarifies differences
- Children can do things that adults won't/ can't do- conflict leads to more conflicts
- They too, are like us; everyone has the same rights and the same basic needs

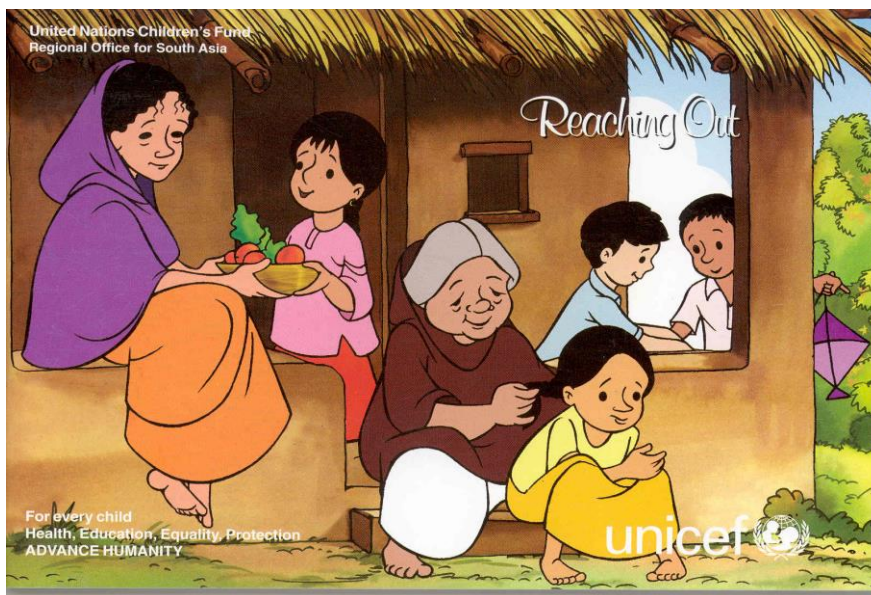
Life Skills:

- Self awareness; communication skills; critical thinking; decision making
- Problem solving; conflict resolution and management

One morning, Meena and Raju find out that people from a faraway village have settled at the edge of their village. Meena makes friends with Mala, a little IDP girl of her age and finds out from her that they have run away as their village was attacked. Many died in the attack and Mala's grandmother got lost in the commotion. Her people have barely to eat and are suffering from wounds and diseases. Meena's village is suspicious of the new settlers. However, the teacher visits them and manages to bring three children to school. Meena is very happy to find Mala among them but her friends warn her not to play with Mala, calling her dirty and different. They threaten to ostracize Meena if she doesn't listen to them. Meena is in great dilemma. Under pressure, she chooses to ignore Mala in school though it breaks her heart. Mala stops coming to school.

Finally, after many discussions, the village chief, Meena's father, other villagers and Meena and her friends decide to visit the new settlers. Seeing the large group marching towards them, the settlers get nervous and prepare for a fight. When the two groups face each other the tension is broken by Mala who runs towards Meena and hugs her, pleased to see her in her community. This starts a dialogue between the adults and the village headman promises to discuss the rehabilitation issues of the settlers with higher government authorities. The villagers promise to help the settlers, as much as possible, till the government assistance arrives.

Reaching Out (on HIV/AIDS)



Main Messages:

- People suffering from HIV/AIDS need love and support
- Stigmatization; living positively when infected by the disease
- Need for community support to AIDS orphans

Life Skills:

- Self awareness; empathy
- Communication and negotiation skills; critical thinking
- Decision making and problem solving

Meena's friend Babul's father has died of AIDS and his mother is also suffering from AIDS. Grandmother is worried about it and forbids Meena and Raju to play with Babul. Babul overhears grandma and is angry. He rejects any kind of friendly gestures from Meena and Raju. In an effort to help, Meena tells Mithu, her parrot, to fly and deliver vegetables and eggs at Babul's doorsteps when no one is looking.

One day, when the river is high, with his wooden toy ducks, Raju goes there to check it out. Accidentally, one duck falls in the river. In trying to rescue it, Raju trips and falls, too. As he almost drowns, Babul sees him and jumps into the river and saves his life. Meena, Grandma and other adults rush to the scene. Grandma understands how she has hurt Babul and embraces him. Later, the health worker tells everyone how HIV virus spreads and the need for care and support to people suffering from HIV and AIDS. The neighbours agree to support Babul and his family.

Appendix 2

Meena Communication Initiative Terms of Reference for Oversight Board

Purpose

The Oversight Board will;

- 1) Act in defence of UNICEF interests with regard to the Meena Communication Initiative
- 2) Oversee agreements, developments and new products involving the MCI.
- 3) Be a point of referral for advice on implementation and good practise for programme makers and partner organisations.

Composition

- 1) The Board will comprise all Country Representatives in the UNICEF South Asia region and will be chaired by the Regional Director, or the Deputy Regional Director as directed by the RD.
- 2) A meeting of the oversight board will be held as a distinct session during the period of each Regional Management Team meeting.
- 3) A quorum will be at least 6 board members from country offices or their designated representatives.
- 4) In the event of the need for decisions or actions that cannot wait until the next RMT, the Regional Director will take soundings from Board members and communicate recommended action.
- 5) The Regional Communication section of ROSA will act as a secretariat for the MCI Oversight Board with the Regional Communication Adviser, or a designated UNICEF staff member, acting as secretary to the Board.
- 6) Other UNICEF staff , or those representing partner organisations, can be co-opted onto the Board if all members are in full agreement and a specific reason and time line not exceeding 18 months is stated.

Activities

The Board will;

- 1) Treat as a matter of primary importance infringement of copyright, or any other activity that affects UNICEF's good name with respect to the MCI or the good standing of the MCI, and will recommend actions.
- 2) Seek to maximise opportunities to expand the work of the MCI.
- 3) Encourage the development of MCI in countries and acceptance of the MCI by institutions and media.
- 4) Call for papers and reports relating to MCI activities in countries for discussion by members with a view to making recommendations, learning lessons and ensuring strategic development.
- 5) Act as approving authority for regional or extra-regional MCI agreements or strategies.
- 6) Produce a yearly report for internal use on MCI activities, expenditures, good practices and issues.

